EAST BAY EXPRESS

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Life In the Shadows

Ale Sho's family left a Thai refugee camp only to find itself in an even tougher spot — inner-city Oakland, amidst a recession.

By Momo Chang

NEWS 8

FRUITVALE'S PUSHCART WARS

Restaurateurs say they're being hurt by illegal operators.

CULTURE SPY 19

THE WHITE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

Chinaka Hodge's new play explores racial identity via a black girl trapped in a white body [illegible]

A phenotypically white child is born into an African American family. She's the last of four children; the rest are boys. On her thirteenth birthday, the daughter has a muscle memory of a lynching. That event opened a male tunnel to the past, said poet-turned-playwright Chinaka Hodge, who developed the story under the auspices of San Francisco nonprofit Intersection for the Arts. Called *Mirrors in Every Corner*, it began as an odd idea — a white black girl — and became a full-length theatrical production. Hodge wanted to put the whole idea of racial authenticity into question, and make us decide whether "whiteness" and "blackness" are ingrained or constructed. It was a decidedly bold move for the 25-year-old writer. After a decade spent plumbing the depths of her own psyche, she's found ways to unsettle the rest of us. *Story inside*

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On the Cover *Ale Sha and his family. Photograph by Joseph Schell.*

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Graphic Designers Brian Kelly, Nicholas Wong

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Systems Managers James Nathaniels
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NEWS & OPINION

EAST BAY EXPRESS
The Trouble With Electric Cars

LETTERS

Car Owners Should Pay

I do not understand why it should be the cities' responsibility to provide accommodation for electricity for cars parked on the street. Cars parked on the street are already a liability to cities, as they are the most susceptible to theft and burglary, the two most common crimes in the country. The cost of their liability may be the largest expense that cities and counties incur, yet their owners do not pay property taxes on the land that they are using, unlike those who park on their own property. If we allow these people to put electrical outlets on the street, will we incur additional liability if they suddenly decide that they "own" that parking space and harass anyone else who wants to park there? Who is going to make sure that they will be responsible if there is a problem?

In cities where there are people without homes, we should not be giving tax-free land for automobiles at all. We should be looking at ways to make car owners pay for themselves, not subsidizing them even more.

Bruce De Benedictis, Oakland

Ditch Electric, Go With Biodiesel

If Marty Goulart has such a "hang-up [her] butt about [her] carbon footprint," she might consider a different solution than a plug-in hybrid car. I can't believe Robert Gammon's article never once mentions the fact that until electricity generation becomes more dependent on renewable sources, such as wind, solar, et al, electric cars will do next to nothing to decrease carbon emissions. The craze over hybrids, as well as the sure-to-follow craze over plug-ins, manages to ignore this. Once upon a time, this inconvenient truth was at least given a smidgen of media coverage, especially around the time that Gov. Schwarzenegger announced his absurd commitment to hydrogen-powered vehicles, but it seems to be left out of the discussion in the road consumerist rush for feel-good cars.

For a fraction of the cost of a hybrid, a Bay Area driver can get just about any diesel vehicle and run it on 99 percent recycled biodiesel, made from discarded vegetable oil and full synthetic motor oil. Few modern diesels require any modification whatsoever, and those that do simply need a few hoses and gaskets. Compare that cost with a $7,000 "plug-in kit" as described in the article. Biodiesel vehicles emit far fewer pollutants than traditional hybrids, and often average superior MPG to boot. Right now, there is only one biodiesel station in Berkeley, but it is extremely convenient to get to from just about anywhere (and it's a worker-owned cooperative: would you rather watch your electricity bill soar as you line PG&E's pockets?), and there are several in San Francisco, as well.

I shed a petrol-free tear for Ms. Goulart as I ponder the total costs of her investment(s), as well as the cost to the environment by a potentially huge spike in electricity demand in the coming decade, due to green wannabes who don't see the big picture when they plunk down $30,000+ on a car dependent on coal-fired and nuclear-generated electricity.

Peter Cinholm, Richmond

Get Real Already

The "Trouble with Electric Cars" is not that we don't have the proper electric infrastructure, but that they help build a disastrous urban infrastructure.

Berkeley, home of supposed radical thinkers (radical from the root in Latin "radix" meaning "root") should get to the root of this problem, but so far almost no one there seems to get it. The problem with any "better" car is that it produces the far worse city.

This is a point for whole-systems thinking that eludes almost everyone but is crucial to solving our problems at this time in history, even evolution, since the impacts of the built environment are enormous, direct, powerful and extraordinarily destructive of climate, nature and agriculture. The low-density development/car/paving/cheap energy infrastructure is a whole system of integrally related parts, not an aggregate of unrelated parts, and we'd better realize that the whole thing is pathologically dysfunctional and check it fast for what in some circles is called the "recovery."

We fixed the car once before, and I was living there at the time: Los Angeles in the 1960s, in the age of throat-searing, eye-burning, thousands-of-"excess-deaths"-a-year, darkness-at-the-crack-of-noon smog. City of Lost Angeles lost angels because they couldn't see where they were flying. We all wanted to get some good end point indicators established, such as clean air and healthy bodies so we could get back to our surfing in actual sunshine, drive to

Letters Policy

Please provide your full name, address, and daytime phone number, although we will only print your name, city, and affiliation. Send submissions to Letters@EastBayExpress.com or Letters, *East Bay Express*, 620 3rd St., Oakland, CA 94607. Letters are edited for length and clarity.

the beach in our woodies. So we fitted the car with the smog device. It really worked, too, knocking out about 95 percent of the smog.

So LA solved its local air pollution problem — and forty years later it gave us climate change. Remember? It was the leader, the city of high mobility, city of the future and the world followed. A month ago China passed the US in number of cars purchased. They are still following on the success of the better car, which is a victorious war that destroys its own spoils — a doubly bad and dumb deal.

Time to get real. The car is incorrigible. There is no such thing as a better car. A better machine gun just kills better. A better car just makes for more destruction. So it's time to face that the house/car/paving/cheap energy system can't work. The simple apartment near what you need and assisted by bicycles, transit, and good mixed-use design is the answer. Stop worrying about the car and think.

Richard Register, Oakland

More Diverse Than Berkeley

Your editorial opposing Alameda's Measure B was appropriate. That SunCal-designed ballot measure would have been disastrous for our island city.

However, I must protest your outrageous statement that "Measure A [is] a racist initiative designed to keep people of color out of Alameda by blocking the construction of less-expensive apartments and condos." Racist? So a low density law is by definition racist? Please explain that to us. Is that because people of color love living in crowded apartment buildings? Or is it because all people of color are poor? Or maybe you think all poor people are racial minorities? Your statement begs for clarification or retraction.

Since 1973, Measure A has kept Alameda an island of safe neighborhoods, quiet streets, and high home values. Even with the chaos of Oakland at its doorstep, Alameda has maintained excellent schools and low crime.

More importantly, Alameda has managed to do this as a culturally and racially diverse city. Alameda is actually more diverse than Berkeley! A quick look at the 2000 Census will show you: Alameda is 56.9 percent White, while Berkeley is 59.2 percent White. Alameda is 26.2 percent Asian, while Berkeley is only 16.4 percent Asian. Alameda is 6.2 percent African-American, and 9.3 percent Latino.

How about doing some homework before throwing about the "racist" label?

Lorenzo Puertas, Alameda

More Prevention Resources Needed

I am a family law attorney in Alameda County. In addition to representing parents in custody disputes, I am appointed by the court to represent children in high conflict custody disputes and I also sit as a Judge Pro Tem in family court. From my perspective the article completely missed the larger social issues that result in cases like "A Father's Quest."

As a society, we have failed to teach many of the skills that might have helped the Tyberian parents resolve their own dispute, without court intervention. We do not value communication skills, nor do we teach them in school. We do not as a general rule require parents to participate in parenting classes. We certainly do not teach any kind of conflict-resolution skills. Instead, we spend unjustifiable amounts of money on conflict and incarceration after the fact.

The courts spend far more money on criminal cases and juvenile cases than family law cases — which seems counter-productive. If we devoted more resources to families in crisis in the first place, by offering meaningful therapeutic interventions, mediation, and communication skills, we might have fewer criminal and juvenile cases. Family courts desperately need the time and resources necessary to work with parents, investigate the facts, consider all the available evidence, and render the best possible informed decision to create a positive, constructive parenting plan.

I empathize with Tyberian. I know what it's like to represent a child when the parents cannot communicate and are committed to the dysfunctional dance of conflict. When I have asked my young clients to imagine the proverbial three wishes, they consistently choose an end to the parental conflict over everything else.

From my perspective, the family law bench officers in Alameda County and the court-connected mediators are diligent, committed people who try very hard to make the right decisions. Their ability to achieve that result is greatly impacted by inadequate resources.

Nikki Clark, Law Office of Nikki Clark, Oakland

Get Rid of the Mayor's Seat

In my opinion, Ron Dellums has shown Oakland that it does not need a mayor. The city can be run and managed by an active city council and a city manager with the president of the council handling any signatory events. Dellums has wasted Oakland's time and money. Oakland needs to shut down the office of mayor.

Also, Oakland is desperately in need of a fiscal manager and an attitude that it will not spend and overspend whatever revenue it takes in. Per the last census, Oakland employees were paid an average monthly take home pay that was the highest of ALL large cities in the country. This is totally irresponsible.

And Oakland needs an ongoing public disclosure of the salaries, benefits, and pensions that it pays Oakland employees — these will prove to be unsustainable.

The people of Oakland need to vote down every new tax because all money paid in ends up being absorbed by the salaries, benefits, and pensions of Oakland employees and Oakland itself never gets ahead.

Pauline Zamlek, Oakland

Extreme Gratitude

Kudos to Kristy Evans' profile on Angela Gossow of Arch Enemy and her intelligently written article on women in metal.

Gems such as this wonderful article pop up only once in a few years. Thank you for assigning her this piece and thanks to the *East Bay Express* for covering extreme and independent artists in the music scene.

Lorenzo dP Valencia, Publicity & Video Promotions
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SEVEN DAYS

BART ARROGANCE KILLS AIRPORT CONNECTOR

The agency underestimated a civil rights complaint and failed to comprehend that the Obama administration is not like its predecessor

By Robert Gammon

When local activists filed a federal civil rights complaint against BART last year over the Oakland airport connector project, the public agency dismissed the allegations as frivolous. After all, the feds hadn't shown much interest in BART's treatment of minority and low-income riders. But BART officials failed to realize that the Obama administration, unlike its predecessor, takes civil rights issues seriously.

Late last week, the Federal Transit Administration showed just how serious it is when it took away $70 million in federal stimulus funds from BART's planned automated guideway to the Oakland airport. In a strongly worded letter, FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff called the civil rights complaint "well founded," and indicated that BART should not have ignored it. The complaint essentially said that BART should have examined the effects on minorities of replacing a $3 shuttle to the airport with an expensive automated guideway that will cost passengers up to $6.

The move means that the $500 million airport connector is probably dead in the water. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that another $105 million that was earmarked for the project and tied to federal stimulus money also is in jeopardy. Moreover, Rogoff threatened to take the $70 million away from the Bay Area entirely, unless the Metropolitan Transportation Commission redirects the funds immediately to other qualifying projects. As a result, AC Transit could receive nearly $7 million in new funding this week.

BART officials still seem in denial. In a prepared statement, General Manager Dorothy Dugger said: "BART's commitment to Title VI and Civil Rights is strong and abiding and we are fully committed to completing and correcting any deficiencies in our program." She didn't note that BART has repeatedly raised fares and cut service in recent years, while plowing forward with line extensions that serve mostly white, suburban riders.

Rogoff warned BART last month that it needed to devise a plan to correct its civil rights violations right away. BART officials apparently acknowledged to him that it would have been impossible for them to complete the study and come into compliance by September 30, the deadline for stimulus dollars.

Berkeley Faces Pot Club Suit

The Berkeley City Council decided last week to allow a pot club to move near a private elementary school and daycare center. The council could have altered an existing law that prohibits pot clubs of being within 1,000 feet of public schools. But Mayor Tom Bates said that the council decided that altering the law would have been unfair because the Berkeley Patients Group medical marijuana dispensary had submitted its request to relocate under the existing rules.

Tom Bates.

If the council had chosen to also prohibit pot clubs from moving next to private schools and daycare centers, then the Berkeley Patients Group likely would have sued. But because the council didn't, it probably will be sued by area businesses, and possibly the private Ecole Bilingue de Berkeley. "It was just a situation of who was going to sue us," Bates said.

Berkeley, San Leandro Okay Instant Runoffs

The Berkeley council adopted ranked choice voting for the November election after the San Leandro council did the same, according to the *Berkeley Daily Planet*. The decisions mean that Oakland's costs for implementing the new voting format will be much lower this year. If Berkeley and San Leandro leaders had reject ranked choice voting, then Oakland would have had to spend up to $1.5 million in 2010. But because they agreed to go forward with it, then Oakland's expenditure is estimated to be no more than it would normally spend on a June primary. In other words, concerns that ranked choice voting would significantly harm Oakland's budget are probably unfounded.

Bates said last month that the Berkeley council was prepared to say no to ranked choice voting if San Leandro didn't adopt it, because without its involvement, then Berkeley's costs would have been too high. Unlike Oakland, Berkeley and San Leandro did not have a strict voter mandate to implement the new voting format, which allows people to rank politicians on their ballots, and thus eliminate the need for a primary election.

Three-Dot Roundup

The owners of the *Berkeley Daily Planet* announced that it will become a web-only publication beginning March 1. However, it's unclear how long the online newspaper will survive. The *Planet* took a beating during the recession, and it was damaged by a payroll fraud scam, its sometimes anti-business editorial slant, and a boycott mounted by ultra-conservative Jews who objected to the publication of opinions critical of Israel. ... A San Francisco judge indicated last week that the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* will be allowed to take half of the *SF Weekly's* advertising revenues as a downpayment on a $20 million judgment. The move, if it goes forward, threatens the *Weekly's* survival.

Berkeley city revenues have declined because more residents are recycling and don't need to pay as much for curbside garbage pickup. ●

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Seven Days is culled from our news blog, 92510.

ECO WATCH

BERKELEY'S NEW PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN

Mayor Tom Bates has come up with a compromise proposal to avoid a nasty election fight with NIMBYs and anti-density groups

By Robert Gammon

The City of Berkeley last year adopted a landmark plan for its downtown area that promised to spur urban growth and help lessen the impacts of climate change. But then a coalition of NIMBYs and anti-density activists mounted a campaign against the plan, arguing that it wasn't "green" enough. Ultimately, the opposition was able to convince enough voters to sign a referendum to put the issue on the ballot. But next week, Mayor Tom Bates, a proponent of last year's plan, will unveil a new compromise proposal designed to eliminate the need for an ugly election battle.

Bates' plan is a carrot-and-stick approach. It would allow downtown developers to cut through the city's infamously Byzantine permitting process if they build greener projects. The developments also would have social equity components more stringent than current city law requires. Bates calls the tradeoff the "Voluntary Green Pathway Development."

New downtown buildings, for example, would not only have to be LEED Gold certified, but they would have to provide open space and their tenants would not be eligible for residential parking permits in an effort to curb auto use. "We think it would be a real winner," Bates said of the plan.

The mayor's proposal, which will be reviewed by the City Council next week, also would require that 20 percent of housing developments be affordable units. That used to be the standard in Berkeley until an appellate court struck down so-called inclusionary zoning laws last year. Bates' plan also requires developers to pay prevailing wages and to employ 30 percent of their workforce from Berkeley or other cities in the East Bay Green Corridor, including Oakland and Richmond.

In exchange, developers would get a streamlined city-approval process. But if developers decline to abide by the "green pathway," they would be subjected to the current system, which often scares off potential development or results in huge delays that derail projects.

In addition, all new downtown buildings would be required to achieve a tougher green standard than is currently required, regardless of whether they choose the "green pathway" or not. For example, buildings would have to provide car-sharing opportunities, AC Transit passes, and on-site bike parking, while guaranteeing that parking spaces are rented separately from apartments or condos. They would have to meet stricter energy-efficiency standards and ensure no new water runoff.

Even with these new green standards, it's unclear how opponents will react to Bates' proposal. Councilmen Jesse Arreguin and Kriss Worthington, who led the fight against last year's plan, did not return phone calls seeking comment for this story. Bates said that if they choose not to support it, then he may push to put it on the ballot anyway. Such a move could force Arreguin and Worthington into a tough position, because both are running for reelection this year and it may not look good if they're campaigning against a plan to green the downtown at the same time.

The city's development community, meanwhile, may not be completely happy with Bates' proposal either. Mark Rhoades, former manager of Berkeley city planning who is now a developer, said that while he likes portions of the mayor's plan, he objects to the limits on taller buildings. Last year's plan, for example, would have allowed three buildings taller than 180 feet. The new proposal allows three at 140 feet and three at 160 feet, but none higher.

Moreover, Rhoades argued that Bates' plan, in reality, will allow for no new tall buildings at all. "The 140-foot buildings," he said, "don't pencil out for developers because of the huge costs of constructing taller buildings to meet fire safety codes. To earn a profit, developers need to build much higher — at least 160 feet or 180 feet — in order to construct more units and increase revenues. "It has to be a minimum of 160 feet to even think about working," he said. "Those 140-foot buildings won't get built."

Greening the Milk

The Obama administration introduced new standards for the dairy industry late last week that could restore the term "organic" to its proper meaning. The new regulations also could be a significant blow to two giant dairy companies that raise cows on factory farms under a loophole in the old rules.

The new regulations from the United States Department of Agriculture require that cows graze on pastureland for at least 120 days a year. The new rules also require that at least 30 percent of an organic cow's diet comes from pasture. In other words, cows must be grazing on the land in order to be considered organic and can't be crowded into large feedlots year-round. "These minimum benchmarks will assure consumers that industrial-scale dairies don't just create the illusion of grazing," said Mark Kastel of the Cornucopia Institute, a group that has fought hard to expose the greenwashing of milk.

The old rules had only required that cows had "access" to pasture. Critics said that factory farms exploited that rule by putting their cows on giant feedlots in deplorable conditions and then only sent the cows to pasture to rest or walk around. The cows wouldn't actually graze on the pastureland because they weren't hungry. The loophole gave the factory farms a huge competitive advantage, because they could squeeze thousands of cows onto a relatively small area of land and wouldn't have to worry about overgrazing.

Critics contended that two large companies, Dean Foods, which owns the Horizon brand, and Aurora Organic Dairy, which makes the house-brand milk for Safeway, Trader Joe's, Wal-Mart, and Costco, were able to drive smaller organic farmers out of business using these tactics (see "Green Washing the Milk," 11/25/09). ◆

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EAST BAY EXPRESS

THE FRUITVALE PUSHCART WARS

Fruitvale-area restaurant owners and legal pushcart vendors say they're being hurt by merchants who break the law, and the city is doing nothing about it.

Ellen Cushing

Just after 8 a.m., the stretch of sidewalk lining Fruitvale Avenue near East 13th Street is clogged as small groups crowd around three pushcarts, buying hot coffee, fresh fruit, and tamales. But across the street, Mi Grullense sits empty. Edgar Galindo, who runs the restaurant and tequila bar with his father, estimated that he has lost a third of his customers in the past year. Though he says the flagging economy is certainly to blame, Galindo also believes that the pushcarts are a large part of the reason he was forced to lay off several waitresses last year and put $80,000 of his own money into the business.

Galindo is but one of many Fruitvale restaurant owners who say their revenues have dropped recently because of the pushcarts, many of which violate the terms of their peddling licenses and still more of which operate without licenses altogether. Joe Martinez, whose Golden Hours liquor store competes with the carts for sales of soft drinks and water, said he has "absolutely" seen profits go down. Ramon Peña, who owns Peña's Bakery No. 2, said sales of French bread, which the carts also sell, have declined. And Eva Saucedo, who runs another restaurant on International Boulevard, estimated that she has lost 50 percent of her business in the last year to a combination of the economy and the pushcarts.

The restaurant industry has been among the hardest hit in the recession, and as the market gets smaller for everyone in Fruitvale, it appears that the pushcarts, which pay little overhead, charge lower prices, and often set up shop just yards away from restaurants, are drawing more and more customers away from brick-and-mortar businesses. And as the City of Oakland, which has suffered enormous staff cuts in the past year, fails to crack down on the numerous carts that violate their licenses or operate without them entirely, there appears to be no end in sight to Fruitvale's pushcart wars.

Pushcart vending was illegal in Oakland until 2001. But then a group of vendors using the name Asociación de Comerciantes Ambulantes de Fruitvale and led by community organizer Emilia Otero with the support of Councilman Ignacio De La Fuente, convinced the city council to pass an ordinance allowing for a small number of licensed pushcarts. The organization's goal, according to Otero, was to legalize and regulate a practice that was already alive and well, and provide a space and a set of tools for a handful of vendors — largely Mexican immigrants living below the poverty line — to start above-ground businesses. "This is bringing people out of poverty," Otero said. "It's putting food [on] many tables and saving many families."

But now, twelve years after the association was formed and nearly a decade after the city made pushcart vending legal, the number of pushcarts has multiplied, as has the number of conflicts — between vendors and the city, vendors and restaurants, and vendors and each other. What began as a microbusiness venture has now become a large-scale competitive market whose ups and downs can have very real consequences for vendors and customers. It also appears that city resources can no longer match the outsize scale of the operation.

Doug Boswell

Otero estimates that there are now 120 illegal pushcarts operating in Oakland — twice as many as the number that operate legally. She says that the illegal pushcarts are largely operated by a small group of vendors who aggressively take business away from legitimate carts and pay no fees to the city. "These pirates, they take our business away, and our carts are the ones who are paying," she said. "It's out of control. The pirates are doing whatever they want to do around the city."

Jose Inestroza, who operates a legal cart on 35th Avenue and International Boulevard, said that because unlicensed carts pay no taxes or fees, they can undercut his prices. And another licensed vendor, who refused to give his name for fear of conflict, said that while he sells tamales for $1.50, the unlicensed vendor who parks across the street from him sells them for $1 and has been slowly siphoning business away. "It's very bad," he said in Spanish. "It gets harder and harder."

And perhaps worse is the potential for health-code violations presented by the illegal pushcarts, which, without the supervision of the Alameda County Health Department, operate largely out of homes. Otero said she has seen photographs of vendors storing fruit in dirt- and fly-covered backyards and making tamales in kitchens with dirty diapers on the table. All of the unlicensed vendors approached for this story declined to comment.

The conflict between licensed and unlicensed vendors runs deep and long, and has likely worsened in the recession. But it may not be just the unlicensed carts that are operating illegally. Galindo argued that many of the association's carts also violate city code by using carts that are larger than allowed and by failing to comply with the mandate that carts maintain a 100-feet distance from each other and allow for a clear pedestrian passageway. He also contended that they're violating a section of the city's ordinance that reads: "Vendors shall not locate or create a vending activity that will negatively impact adjacent businesses or residences."

"It's simple," Galindo said. "They're breaking the law."

Indeed, during a recent visit to the area, several pushcarts — some with association decals, some without — were blocking the sidewalk and parking just feet away from restaurants while selling out of coolers despite the rule that all food must be contained within the cart.

Otero denied that licensed pushcarts are violating the ordinance she got passed. "We follow the rules and regulations of the law," she said. "Those statements are totally selfish and untrue." She added that her vendors have never had a problem with the health department. "We make sure they comply with everything."

Galindo said he has appealed to the city, with little luck. As it turns out, this is likely because of budget cuts and staff reshufflings in recent years, according to Chris Lewis, a construction inspection supervisor with the city. The cuts mean that the responsibility for managing complaints falls to three different departments in two different public agencies: Oakland's building and police departments, and the Alameda County Health Department, depending on the nature of the alleged infraction and where exactly it occurred.

Moreover, there is no dedicated employee in the city who is tasked with inspecting and regulating the 200 or so legal and illegal pushcarts that speckle Oakland's sidewalks. "We've experienced a lot of loss of personnel over the past few years," Lewis said. "The people that are left are being asked to do more and more, and being asked to do more outside the area of their expertise." A civil engineer by training, Lewis is the first to admit that he and his office "aren't very good at dealing with food vendors, and that's why it's the mess that it is."

Many of Fruitvale's vendors and restaurant owners say that they just assume pushcarts aren't a high priority for the city. "They don't have enough time. They have more important things," the anonymous vendor said. For his part, Galindo doesn't understand why the city has failed to respond to his complaints. "I don't know why — my dad says the city told him they feel sorry for [the vendors], or they probably just don't have enough time," he said. "So it's hard to say. But the city hasn't done anything to help us out."

Until they do, he said, he and his family are confident that they will continue to make things work, partly by cutting costs and partly by selling hot food from a folding table they've set up on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant. But even though the restaurant is not currently in danger of going under, what's clear from the looks of the empty restaurant and Galindo's face is that it's hard and getting harder for places like Mi Grullense to make ends meet. ●

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FULL DISCLOSURE

LOBBYING FOR CAMPAIGN REFORM

Proposition 15 on the June ballot would tax lobbyists to pay for a test run of publicly funded political campaigns.

By Robert Gammon

It is no secret that special-interest money has corrupted our political system. Big donors get no-bid contracts and sweetheart deals because politicians know that if they don't do what their contributors want, they might lose their donations — and the next election. The huge donations also allow incumbents to amass campaign war chests, scaring off other candidates and resulting in fewer people engaged in the political process. Yet despite these well-documented problems, California voters have turned down previous efforts to reform the system. This June, however, good-government advocates hope they can finally convince voters to agree to publicly financed campaigns that would lessen the influence of Big Money.

Proposition 15, also known as the California Fair Elections Act, would set up a test case for publicly financed campaigns — the 2014 race for secretary of state. Candidates who voluntarily agree to the rules of Prop. 15 would not be allowed to raise funds from corporations, wealthy donors, unions, or anyone else, and instead would receive public financing. They also would receive funds to respond to so-called "independent" committees set up by special interests that finance attack ads against them or support their opponents.

The measure is sponsored by state Senator **Loni Hancock** and backed by numerous good-government groups, including the League of Women Voters and California Common Cause. "The main motivation behind this is that the amount of money in our political process is outrageous," explained **Trent Lange**, president of the Clean Money Campaign, a nonprofit that worked closely with Hancock.

What sets Prop. 15 apart from previous reform efforts is its funding mechanism. It would finance the campaign for the secretary of state's office by levying a $350 annual fee on California lobbyists. There are about 4,800 registered lobbyists, lobbying firms, and lobbyist employers in California, which means the measure would raise nearly $7 million by the 2014 election. Currently, California lobbyists pay only $12.50 a year to register with the state, one of the lowest such fees in the nation.

The idea of forcing lobbyists to pay to help fix California's broken political system also strikes a populist nerve, tapping into voter anger about the failure of government to solve even our most basic problems. In a recent poll by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California, 79 percent of likely voters said that California government is "pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves." And according to backers of Prop. 15, an October 2009 survey of likely voters showed the measure leading by a three to one margin.

That would be a huge turnaround from 2006, when Prop. 89, which also would have allowed publicly funded campaigns, garnered just 26 percent of the vote. The big difference was that Prop. 89 would have financed elections through increased taxes on corporations, which led many consumers to worry that the higher business costs would be passed on to them. And Prop. 89 called for publicly financed campaigns for all state offices.

To qualify for financing under Prop. 15, major-party candidates would have to gather signatures and $5 donations from at least 7,500 registered voters. The candidates would be limited to spending only $75,000 from those private donations, and could raise and spend no more private money. They would then receive $1 million in public funds for the primary and $1.3 million for the general election — about the same amount spent by current Secretary of State **Debra Bowen** in 2006.

The measure also addresses the problems created by so-called "soft money" groups and by rich candidates who won't participate in the program. If a "fair-elections" candidate is outspent by a privately financed opponent, or if other groups spend money attacking the candidate or supporting the opponent, then the candidate will receive public matching funds of up to $4 million total for the primary and $5.2 million in the general election. Proponents of the measure don't expect to break the bank in 2014 because the race for secretary of state doesn't typically result in huge campaign expenditures.

However, as attractive as the lobbyist fee may be, it also might ultimately derail Prop. 15. Lobbyists argue that it violates their First Amendment guarantee to "petition the government for a redress of grievances." And they may have a point. The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office warned in 2008 that the lobbying fee might be unconstitutional. Courts in Arizona, Oregon, and Vermont have all struck down similar laws that used lobbying fees to pay for publicly financed campaigns. The courts ruled that such fees could only be used to administer the lobbying registration programs in those states.

> Lobbyists argue that it violates their right to "petition the government for a redress of grievances." And they may have a point.

The California lobbying trade group, Institute of Governmental Advocates, has already filed suit in both state and federal court to stop Prop. 15. But judges in both courts ruled that the group will have to wait and see if the measure passes to go forward. **Thomas Hiltachk**, a Sacramento attorney representing the lobbyists, said he will file suit immediately after the June election if Prop. 15 wins.

However, even if the lobbyists get the higher fees invalidated, the ultimate fate of Prop. 15 remains unclear. The courts could keep the rest of the measure intact and require only that the legislature come up with another way to fund it. Or the courts could decide that Prop. 15 would not have passed had it not been for the lobbying fee, and, as a result, it should be thrown out entirely. Either way, there is no doubt that Prop. 15 will prompt a long legal battle after the election if it wins. Which is unfortunate, because it's past time that we removed the corrupting influence of big donors in our political process. ●

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MOMO CHANG

Oo Meh, April Nl, Bo Aeh, and Gesto Ni stand in the breezeway of the apartment complex they share with other recent Burmese refugees. Oo Meh and Gesto Ni were Karenni rice farmers who spent more than 20 years in a Thai refugee camp before arriving in Oakland just months ago.

Still Seeking Refuge

The East Bay's new Burmese immigrants left their homes in Thai refugee camps only to find themselves in an even tougher spot — inner-city Oakland amidst a punishing recession that threatens the assistance they depend upon. By Momo Chang

Ale Sho had been in the United States just three weeks when he and his neighbor were accosted while returning to their apartments from an Asian grocery. Ale Sho was carrying two bags filled with fruit juice and wearing a produce-stuffed backpack that also contained a benefits card loaded with enough credits to sustain him and his family for a month. As the two friends neared to their Eastlake district apartment, three young men who had been eyeing them crossed the street and began to follow. Walking the last two blocks more briskly with their heavy groceries, Ale Sho told his neighbor: "They do not look nice."

Just as they reached the gate of their complex, one of the young men grabbed Ale Sho's backpack. Although his neighbor had already run upstairs into the complex, Ale Sho refused to surrender the pack. After a short tug-of-war with the robber, he saw one of the young men pointing a gun at him. Miraculously, Ale Sho was able to get inside the gate and shut it with himself and his groceries intact.

"We had many, many hard times in Burma," said Ale Sho, a lanky man in his thirties who spent the prior fourteen years in a Thai refugee camp. "When we came to the US we thought it will be free, as we feel more upset about [the robbery]. We thought we would be released from the hard times, but we are still unsafe."

Nothing was stolen from Ale Sho, who like many other Burmese immigrants uses no surname. But the attempted armed robbery left him with a mental scar. Through a translator, he said he is afraid he will run into those young black men again. And although he speaks little English, he believes the men told him something along the lines of "We'll see you again." So he stopped wearing his backpack and is now more cautious around African Americans, even though he knows they are not all robbers.

Like thousands of other refugees from Burma, Ale Sho came to the United States straight from the camp in Thailand. In the last three years alone, about 2,000 such refugees have arrived in California, with more than 300 resettling in the East Bay, most of them in Oakland.

Their journey to Oakland is just the latest chapter in a long quest for freedom that includes civil wars, poverty and forced relocation from a land 9,000 miles from here. But while the US government offered these refugees protection and the promise of a new life, the ones who wound up in Oakland arrived to discover themselves in the middle of another hostile environment — urban America during the worst economic crisis in generations.

Many Burmese refugees in their twenties or even thirties were born in the refugee camps and thus have no work experience, making their transition all the more difficult. Even for those with work experience, transitioning from agrarian village life to urban life is a challenge. They come with little preparation for American life, and almost no money or English skills.

And to complicate matters, many do not even consider themselves Burmese. Instead, they identify themselves through their ethnic affiliation. Ale Sho and most of the other recent arrivals are Karenni, members of a tiny Burmese refugee group. Other immigrants are members of the larger Karen community.

Most of these families are so-called "free cases," a term resettlement workers use to describe refugees who have no family members anywhere in the United States. After all, the first Karenni refugee family arrived in Oakland just last April, although about sixty have since settled here. But the Karenni had no established community here, and their language is little known.

Consequently, resettlement workers often place the new refugees together in the same buildings and neighborhoods. For instance, the apartment complex where Ale Sho lives with his wife, mother, and infant daughter houses four Burmese families. Two are Karenni, one is Indian Burmese, and the other Chin. The interpreter, Nwe Oo, who lives elsewhere in Oakland, is Rakhine, yet another ethnic minority.

Resettlement workers find the task of assisting these refugees, particularly the Karenni, one of the most challenging they have ever undertaken.

"When I compare them to how prepared they are for American culture, I'd say they are the least prepared," said Don Climent, the regional resettlement director for the International Rescue Committee, who during the past thirty years has helped to resettle refugees from as far afield as Bosnia, Iraq, and Bhutan. "They have more things to learn and more things to accomplish before they can fully participate in American society."

For the East Bay's growing Burmese refugee population, it is a particularly bad time to be embarking on a new life.

Burma, now called Myanmar, was once a British colony. During that time, the Karenni or Kayah state — one of the smallest and poorest in Burma — was independent. The region, which is along the southeast border near Thailand, is mostly hilly and agricultural. Many Karenni were poor farmers who worked in rice paddies and cut wood from nearby jungles. When Burma gained its independence from Britain in 1947, the government began occupying these lands. Ever since then, the country has been embroiled in civil wars. Ethnic conflicts in the Karenni state and elsewhere led to purging, village burnings, and forced labor.

Ale Sho grew up under the watch of the Burmese military. His father had been made to do forced labor for the military many times, each time coming back with bruises and scars. Village families were often caught in the crossfire of the civil war between armed rebels and the repressive military. Once, the military arrested nearly half their village. Ale Sho and his father

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Ale Sho's brother-in-law Maw Reh lives with the family in its Eastlake apartment

[illegible]

were captured and tortured for a night, and then released. Soon thereafter, in 1994, Ale Sho decided to flee by himself at the tender age of fourteen.

He lived in the jungle and at an ad hoc refugee settlement with other Karenni people for nearly a year before ending up in the refugee camp in Thailand. In those bleak camps, members of Burmese ethnic minorities lived in limbo. They became stateless and belonged to no country. Refugee camps are typically a short-term solution to wars and ethnic cleansing, and the camps were set up in the hope that one day the refugees could return safely to their home country. But returning home to life under the Burmese military junta was not an option for the refugees. Many eventually became "longstayers" who lingered in the camps for decades.

Ale Sho's neighbor Oo Meh and her family fled their village in the late 1970s. For decades — sometimes daily, sometimes a few times a month — Burmese soldiers would come to their village and force them to work. Her father was getting older, and one time they paid another person to work in place of their family. Oo Meh and her family were poor rice farmers and could not keep up with the military's demands. When they fled, they carried with them only rice, a knife and some clothes.

"I was extremely sad," said the petite, long-haired 49-year-old in an interview from her Eastlake home through a translator from her native Karenni. "My heart hurt. Before we left I couldn't sleep. I was afraid the Burmese military would come attack us. We brought some food with us, but not enough." During their escape from Burma they each ate about half a bowl of rice a day for a month while they lived in a nearby jungle. Finally they crossed over into a Thai refugee camp.

Then 22, Oo Meh met her husband, Greto Ni, a Karenni soldier in the guerilla army in the refugee camp. They had both of their children while living in the refugee camps.

There were several camps in Thailand, and the quality of life in them varied. But the camps met only the most basic of human needs. Food was rationed, healthcare was scant, work was prohibited, and there was little quality education. There was no electricity and no paved roads, and families lived in woven bamboo shacks with thatch roofs. People rode bicycles and sometimes motorbikes, but there were no cars or buses. In the schools, camp residents learned Burmese and their ethnic language, and some also learned English, but did not practice it much. If residents left the camps, they would have been in Thailand illegally and could have been caught and deported by the Thai authorities.

So beginning in the 1960s, refugees from Burma began trickling into the United States. Many of the first arrivals — whether refugees, asylum seekers or immigrants for other reasons — were ethnically Chinese or Indian. A democratic student demonstration in 1988 and a coup and ensuing crackdown led to more Burmese arriving in the United States, most of whom were well-educated. Burma is where Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the pro-democratic movement who was elected prime minister in 1990, has been under house arrest for more than a decade. The "Saffron Revolution" of 2007, led by Buddhist monks, and the military junta's crackdown displaced more people.

All in all, these conflicts created half a million refugees.

After the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent passage of the USA Patriot Act, the US government barred certain people from entering the country. The list of excluded immigrants included anyone who had ever supported an armed antigovernment group, including people who provided weapons or food to such rebels. Because members of Burma's ethnic minorities have been embroiled in wars for years, this automatically enrolled most Burmese refugees into this prohibited category.

But people continued to flee Burma, and the humanitarian crisis in the camps was growing. Overcrowded conditions exacerbated the problem, as did the fact that many refugees lingered in camps for decades. In response to this crisis, and to international pressure from resettlement agencies and the United Nations, in 2006 the United States opened its doors to more Burmese refugees. Nearly 14,000 refugees of Burmese ancestry entered the United States in 2007, more than any other group.

When the United States welcomed the Burmese, refugees like Oo Meh and Greto Ni took the chance. "We planned for one year to come to the U.S.," Oo Meh said. "We felt happy to leave."

But just months after arriving in the United

States, many of these same refugees were expressing frustration and fear combined with a loss of hope. "I don't feel well," Oo Meh said. "I want to go back to the camps. I can't speak the language. I don't have my friends, my people."

Oo Meh and Greto Ni take English classes through the Oakland adult schools, but they say they don't really understand much of what is taught in class. Meanwhile, robbery victim Ale Sho has been in the country for nine months and is taking English classes. He is receiving public assistance and only recently began looking for a job through Lao Family Community Development, because he couldn't get into the International Rescue Committee's employment program. Until recently, he didn't know where to get help or how to find a job.

Other refugee groups typically arrive in the United States with better language skills. For instance, many Iraqi refugees are professionals who speak English, and even most Bhutanese refugees have English skills. But for the Karen and Karenni refugees, English isn't their second or even third language. They speak their native tongue, Burmese, and often some Thai.

"For new communities in general, access to the English language is one of the key ingredients for incorporation success," says Khatharya Um, associate professor of Asian American studies at UC Berkeley, whose work focuses on Southeast Asian refugees. For instance, Um said, an English-speaking refugee with no more than a third-grade education is in a better position to navigate the system and find a job than a high-school graduate who cannot speak English.

That principal was on display one brisk November morning when Oo Meh and Greto Ni's sons, Be Reh and April Ni, went cold-calling for jobs. Because both young men had been in the International Rescue Committee's employment program for three months and had no luck finding a job, staff members there decided it was time to go door-to-door. And because April Ni washed dishes in one of the Thai refugee camp's kitchens and both young men knew some Thai from their life there, the trio focused their job search on Thai restaurants.

At around 11 a.m., they hopped on an AC Transit bus and headed toward Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley with Aurora Almendral, the International Rescue Committee volunteer who had picked them up at the airport when they first arrived in the United States. After three hours, they had hit up fifteen Thai restaurants.

"We talked to workers and owners to see if they were hiring, and we brought their resumés," Almendral said. But the young men were hesitant about their English skills, and Almendral did most of the talking. Only four restaurants took their résumés. Many managers said they were not hiring, and a few even said they planned on closing soon.

"They just seemed overwhelmed and nervous about all the people that they talked to," Almendral said of her young companions. "About twelve or thirteen of the places didn't say anything hopeful."

April Ni, 19, was born in the refugee camp and had never had a job before. He was taking English classes in the morning and waiting for work, like his brother. "If I get any kind of job, I'm ready to go to work," he said through a translator. "If they call, we'll go. But if they don't, we can't."

Be Reh, 21, shared the same stark assessment as his mother. "The camp is our village," he said through a translator. "The place is ours. We can play, we can go to school. It is better than here. If I had any opportunity to go back

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Igor Radulovic and Nicole Germanov help new refugees find jobs through the Oakland office of the International Rescue Committee.

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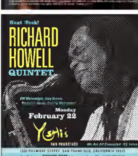
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to camp, I would go."

Still, as a result of their job search, Be Reh eventually began working in landscaping after the husband of one of the restaurant managers hired him on an on-call basis. And April Ni found a job washing dishes at a Vietnamese restaurant in downtown Oakland. He now works there part-time in the evenings, but admits he is sometimes afraid to ride the bus back after his late-night shift.

The two brothers are fortunate. More than 40 percent of the refugees in the International Rescue Committee employment program are unable to find a job within six months.

The International Rescue Committee handles the bulk of Burmese refugee cases in the Bay Area, and is one of ten nongovernmental organizations with which the US State Department contracts to resettle refugees. The committee's Oakland office is a stone's throw from the Tribune Tower in the heart of the hustle and bustle of downtown. At any given time you'll see people from all over the world waiting in the organization's lobby. Committee case managers handle all sorts of issues — from picking them up at the airport and helping refugees find a place to live to translating between parents and their children's schools to finding work for the new arrivals.

The committee has typically located many recent refugees in Oakland because of its relatively low cost of living, access to public transportation and — at one time — manufacturing jobs. Just two years ago, when Karen refugees started arriving in larger groups, the International Rescue Committee placed 78 percent of refugees in jobs within the first six months of moving here. But that number is now down to 58 percent, and the staff expects it to dip still more in the coming months.

"People are hopeless," said interpreter Nwe Oo, a refugee who arrived in 2005. "They come to the US, but they cannot find a job."

Many refugees have to wait months before finding work, sometimes years. About half of the refugees that the International Rescue Committee works with join its employment program upon arrival. But in Oakland the unofficial unemployment rate exceeds 20 percent and jobs are no guarantee.

Even for those refugees who do get jobs, the numbers are bleak. As recently as 2006, the average wage for refugees placed in part-time jobs by the regional International Rescue Committee office was $14.73. In 2009, it plummeted to $8.56.

Meanwhile, the quality of jobs has changed. Four years ago, International Rescue Committee employment specialist Igor Radulovic rarely considered service sector jobs for the refugees he worked with because those are usually part time and often don't include benefits. But today restaurant and hotel jobs are the only ones he can find for new refugees, he said. Higher-paying factory or production jobs are extremely scarce. Most of the jobs now are part time.

Transportation also is a huge issue, since most of them rely on public transit. Some find a job only to resign once they discover that they simply can't afford to commute to Fremont or San Francisco by BART and then bus.

Refugees who can't locate or keep jobs are thrown into the welfare system. In California they can receive public assistance: CalWorks for families with children, or Refugee Cash Assistance for single people. Families of four receive about $800 a month from CalWorks, with a lifetime cap of five years of assistance. A single person receives about $345 a month

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from Refugee Cash Assistance, which lasts eight months. After that, they may be able to tap into the General Assistance welfare pool, which provides even less than Refugee Cash Assistance.

But with a two-bedroom apartment in the Eastlake district of Oakland running about $1,000 a month, families who rely on public assistance typically have almost no money after rent.

Consequently, Clément notes, this year the committee has had to reject many Burmese refugees who hoped to flee the camps for the United States. For example, it won't accept families with five or more kids with unemployable parents. A couple with five children would receive $1,162 a month from CalWorks, but since, by law, the International Rescue Committee has to find a three-bedroom for larger families, CalWorks funds wouldn't even cover the rent. At a time when welfare benefits have been cut and the unemployment rate is so high, to welcome such families to the United States would just be setting them up for failure.

Clément said refugees' needs have changed. When he started working at the International Rescue Committee in 1979, it was resettling primarily Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees. But today, refugees come from all over the world, necessitating more staffing and more nuanced support. And yet welfare and other public assistance have been cut back drastically. The Refugee Cash Assistance once lasted five years; now it's just eight months. CalWorks was recently reduced by 4 percent. Consequently, he and representatives of other US refugee resettlement agencies are urging the federal government to change its policies in supporting new refugees.

"For high-need populations, three or six months is not enough to transition to full self-sufficiency," agreed Um, the Berkeley professor. "Once they're no longer eligible for refugee programs, they may still have challenges, so they have to access the general programs that are there to assist families in need. They just become a part of America's poor and vulnerable."

Um believes the government should invest in language skills, training, and job development for refugees. "It is important that we as a society invest in our human resources, including new refugees, and not just focus on the short-term filling of needs of the economy without any kind of real investment in our population," she said. "Our human resources are the backbone of America."

Karenni men typically wear a bright red, sleeveless poncho-like shirt, but April Ni and his 22-year-old neighbor Maw Reh have not worn theirs since arriving in the United States. During a recent interview at their apartment complex, they explained why.

Shortly after arriving in the United States, they were told not to wear their traditional clothing. "They don't like the color red," April Ni said vaguely. When pressed, he acknowledged hearing at the Oakland Burmese Mission Baptist Church that the color red is affiliated with gangs. Consequently, all of the Karenni refugees interviewed for this story wear Western clothing, although many Karen refugees still wear traditional clothing, or at least a woven sling bag.

Traditional clothing may make refugees an easy target for crime, but just being Asian may be a factor. In the months prior to the robbery that Aie Sho narrowly avoided outside his apartment, a number of other Burmese refugees were robbed while walking down the street, according to Clément and others interviewed.

Translator Nwe Oo

Mano Chang

And just within the last few months, there has been a spike in street robberies specifically targeting Asians in the Eastlake district, according to Alan Yu, Asian liaison officer for the Oakland Police Department. While the actual numbers of robberies in Oakland's Area 2 — the area just east of Lake Merritt to High Street — was not unusual in October and November, almost half of the robbery victims during those months were Asian and many of those robberies were concentrated in the Eastlake area. Language barriers, the notion that Asians keep a lot of cash on hand, and underreporting in Asian communities are some of the biggest factors in these crimes. Like many immigrant communities, Asians are less likely to report crimes to police when they occur, making them more vulnerable to criminals who think they can get away with their crimes.

The long-term impacts of such crimes can be significant, if hard to measure. Maha See, a Burmese-speaking case manager who works at Asian Community Mental Health Services, recently counseled three Burmese refugees who were victims of street robberies.

Almost by definition, most refugees have already experienced trauma, sometimes many times over. A rare study of Karenni refugees published in 2001 by the Centers for Disease Control found that 41 percent experienced depression and 42 percent felt anxiety, along with 4.6 percent who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Even among those who did not already suffer from depression because of their forcible relocation or loss of homes, property, or loved ones, depression is an understandable response to a jarring relocation to the United States, See said. He and another Burmese-speaking staff member recently began providing mental health counseling on a part-time basis. "Since we come from cultures where there's no such thing as counseling or therapy, they are very unaware

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April Ye and neighbor Maw Reh hold a traditional Karenni shirt. They stopped wearing their traditional clothing after hearing that, in Oakland, the color red is associated with gangs.

with how they can ask for psychological or emotional needs," he said. See believes there needs to be more outreach to new refugees.

But besides Asian Community Mental Health Services and the International Rescue Committee, few places offer solace and services for these refugees. Because many Karen and Karenni refugees are Christian, some refugees receive assistance from the Oakland Burmese Mission Baptist Church. Volunteers from Refugee Transitions tutor refugees and their children, and the nonprofit group employs a staff member who speaks Burmese. Staff members of Lao Family Community Development also speak Burmese and can help place refugees in jobs, and there is a Burmese-speaking worker at the Eastmont Wellness Center.

In recent years, the Oakland Unified School District hired a refugee specialist after being awarded a refugee school-impact grant from the US Office of Refugee and Resettlement. Each month at Catholic Charities, groups who work with refugees meet to talk about the different populations as part of the East Bay Refugee Forum.

Still, there is no organization that focuses solely on Burmese refugees in the East Bay. Although there is an existing Burmese community in the East Bay, earlier immigrants were mostly Chinese, Indian, or Burman, not Karen, Karenni, Chin, or Kachin. And there are language, economic, and cultural gaps between all groups.

"That sense of pan-ethnic identity is certainly emerging, but it takes time," said Um, who noted that the same thing happened to Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees after the war in Vietnam. Uniting this fractured group might be difficult but necessary.

Sometimes, new arrivals just need help translating their mail. The International Rescue Committee does much of the work, but sometimes refugees need to be told things many times before they remember, said Zar Ni Maung, a family advocate at Refugee Transitions. There is simply too much information being thrown at them at once.

Other needs are not as easily filled. People need healthcare interpreters, for example, when they go to the hospital. And new arrivals typically don't understand how to navigate systems such as banking or public transportation. Maung tells a story about how one single mother on welfare accidentally opened a savings account instead of a checking account, and overdrafted eight times; now she owes $400 in fees even though she had originally deposited only $175 and taken out $120 from the ATM.

Maung, translator Nwe Oo, and several others are in the process of forming a nonprofit tentatively called the Burmese Refugee Family Network. They have not filed for nonprofit status yet, but have been planning for more than a year. The goal is to fill in the gaps of these other organizations, and assist the organizations since many of the Burmese-speaking social workers are already overloaded. They feel like some of the basic needs of new families are not met. They envision that much of the work will be training volunteers to help translate and advocate on behalf of refugee families.

Still, while the current outlook is bleak, refugee resettlement officials hope the situation is temporary.

"Is it a good idea to come here during this time?" asked Clément. "I think the answer is still yes. ... Their lives in refugee camps was dismal. Even though it is hard for them here, it is a step up. They will have access to education, they will have access to jobs. There is a future there for them here."

Nwe Oo, a mother of three, ultimately believes a community group focused on families' voices and their basic needs is necessary to improve the lives of Burmese refugees.

"There are a lot of Burmese refugees coming here, and they face many issues," Oo said. "The IRC and other organizations are trying to help but they have limitations. We are trying to help our community, especially with basic needs. ... They can learn English, and later on, they can get a better job. Their family life will change little by little. People who came last year, their English skills have improved. So that's what we hope. Change little by little." ●

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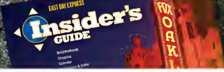

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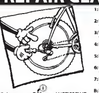

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ARTS & CULTURE

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WHITE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

Chinaka Hodge's new play explores racial identity via a black girl trapped in a white body

By Rachel Swan

A phenotypically white child is born into an African American family. She's the last of four children; the rest are boys. On her thirteenth birthday, the daughter has a muscle memory of a lynching. That event opened a rude tunnel to the past, said poet-turned-playwright Chinaka Hodge, who developed the story under the auspices of San Francisco nonprofit Intersection for the Arts. Called *Mirrors in Every Corner*, it began as an odd idea — a white black girl — and became a full-length theatrical production. Hodge wanted to put the whole idea of racial authenticity into question, and make us decide whether "whiteness" and "blackness" are ingrained or constructed. It was a decidedly bold move for the 25-year-old writer. After a decade spent plumbing the depths of her own psyche, she's found ways to unsettle the rest of us.

The daughter of a computer engineer and former Oakland school board president, Hodge spent her childhood shuttling between her mother's house in the hills and her father's home in West Oakland. She launched her poetry career in middle school, performing at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Fests. "Every year I'd go up and I'd do a 'phenomenal woman' or 'and still I rise' thing — like, you know, whatever," Hodge recalled. "At the end of eighth grade, I started writing poems for myself. I wrote the cover of the eighth-grade dance bulletin. ... Sappy little love poems."

The turning point happened when YouthSpeaks held a workshop at her freshman English class in Berkeley High School. "They asked me to write about what the dark looks like," Hodge remembered. "Which is kind of like the standard YouthSpeaks introduction, but for me, I still remember the poem." At that time Hodge's father was going through a nasty divorce. "I wrote about what the police lights looked like in front of our house when they were going through their altercations. I wrote about what divorce looked like in the dark."

Over the next several years, she would work with YouthSpeaks, first as a summer intern, then as a youth board coordinator, then as a consultant for the New York branch while pursuing a nonprofit arts education degree at New York University. Upon returning home in 2006, Hodge took the reigns as YouthSpeaks associate artistic director. Her organizational and managerial talents were deep-rooted. She's the oldest of seven children, the daughter of a local politician (Greg Hodge) and a consummate over-achiever. She spent four years in New York and dresses the part: knee-high boots, pencil skirts, dark blazers. Yet Hodge also knows how to make an oratorical appeal. As a slam poet, she would dredge up events from her childhood, and present them as remarkable inner transformations. She used metaphor judiciously and managed to balance her introspection with a healthy level of self irony. Most importantly, she knew how to talk about social issues in a language of emotional terms.

And she came up in auspicious company. She was tight with jazz trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, rapper actor Daveed Diggs, and fellow slam poet Marc Bamuthi Joseph, all of whom collaborated on *Mirrors in Every Corner* (Joseph directed, Akinmusire wrote the score, Diggs stars). She also kept close ties with the MC Ise Lyfe, who helped germinate the idea. It came about several years ago, Hodge said, when the two of them were debating the morality of interracial relationships. "He just kept pushing and pushing, and I was like 'Yo Ise, this is what's gonna happen. You're gonna marry the blackest woman you can find. You're gonna be super happy. It's gonna be an amazing relationship, you know? She's gonna be Dark Nubian sis.'" Lyfe agreed. "He was like, 'Yeah yeah, I'm down for all that,'" said Hodge. "Then I was like, 'Yeah, then you're gonna have a baby and the baby's gonna come out white. And then what are you gonna do? You can't manage who you love. Your family is your family.' We kinda laughed about it and that was the end of the day, but the thought kept rumbling in my head, you know?"

Both Hodge and Ise Lyfe had sought poetry as a way to resolve their personal traumas. Hodge had painful memories of her father's divorce. Lyfe came to spoken word after witnessing a homicide at age fifteen. As they got older, the two became interested in more existential questions — stuff about the meaning of race and how physical traits congeal into power relations. Hodge's most powerful piece to date was a monologue about the murder of Oscar Grant, which she performed last December at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, with Akinmusire on trumpet and Kala Gamble on piano. The three had rehearsed for only a few hours — and spent some of that time engrossed in a philosophical debate about whether "talent" actually exists, said Hodge. As a result, she improvised huge swaths of the performance. "Ambrose hit those two high notes ... and I lost my breath," she said. "I started rocking back and forth." The piece was a welter of conflicted feelings: anger about racism, outrage at the police, condemnation of the bystanders who posted their footage on YouTube. But it felt immediate and visceral.

Such artistry has propelled Hodge to the forefront of Oakland's spoken word scene, which, by many people's estimation, is in decline. It has lost the romantic cast it had eight years ago, when Saul Williams and *Def Poetry Jam* carried the day. Many of its principal characters have moved on to other media. Ise Lyfe makes hip-hop albums, Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Sarah Jones do theater, Paul Beatty and Adam Mansbach write novels, Demeen Kane writes songs. Hodge writes plays. To her, it's encouraging to see spoken word pervade other media, and a sign that the genre is far from having one foot in the grave.

Perhaps that's just a natural transition for a scene whose pioneers are now adults. It's no longer satisfying to write about love or divorce, or even inner-strength. Now Hodge and her ilk are grappling with thorny social issues and bringing their work to a higher level of artistry. They're trying to enchant, but more importantly they're trying to provoke. In true post-modern fashion, Hodge cast the African American actress Margo Hall as Random, the white girl (or black girl?) who can't help her unfortunate biological circumstances. She hopes it generates a lot of discussion.

◆

Event Details

Mirrors in Every Corner runs February 25 through March 21 at Intersection for the Arts (446 Valencia St., San Francisco), 8 p.m. Thurs.-Sun. $15-$25. TheIntersection.org

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Rachel.Swan@EastBayExpress.com

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EVENTS & ATTRACTIONS

John Santos.

¡Ay Caribe!

John Santos brings the *filosofía Caribeña* to Oakland

Local percussionist John Santos built a whole-life philosophy on his Caribbean heritage, despite being several generations removed. He grew up in San Francisco's Mission District with a Puerto Rican-American mother and a father from Cape Verde. His parents spoke English, but raised their children in a very Latino environment — the Mission, with its mixed population of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorians, was a microcosm of several Caribbean cultures. Santos learned Spanish by listening to his grandparents and by soaking up the music on his parents' record player. At age twelve he started playing conga in his grandfather's band, and launched a life-long love affair with Latin music.

Twenty years since moving from the Mission to East Oakland, Santos remains one of the most respected bandleaders in town. He's collaborated with Omar Sosa, Santana, Bobby Hutcherson, and Danilo Perez. He's wooed audiences at La Peña Cultural Center with an arsenal of toy instruments (castanets, music boxes, sleigh bells). He's been nominated for five Grammies. And, he said, he constantly has a record in production. "I'm always going in the studio writing, mixing, and working on new projects. I always want to document it." Although Santos has very little formal training, save three years of clarinet lessons in elementary school. He operates on intuition.

Santos' next project, ***Filosofía Caribeña***, will honor the African and Latino elements of Caribbean culture by combining a series of jazz compositions with spoken word and dance choreography. That mix of genres befits the theme, said Santos. After all, jazz is a Creole form that emerged from New Orleans — "a community that's been totally connected for centuries with all the major ports of the Caribbean." Santos' jazz sextet highlights the protean nature of the form, mixing be-bop influences, African percussion instruments, and Caribbean dance rhythms. He's recruited local emcee Rico Pabón for the spoken word component, also apropos of the *filosofía* (spoken word has its genesis in the oral tradition, but is most closely associated with contemporary hip-hop). It's a mixed bag, but Santos says that all of these art forms — poetry, rap, jazz, and Caribbean dance — are moored in the same African tradition. "The center of the Creole world is the Caribbean," Santos explained. "It has a nasty colonial history ... but it's given birth to people that are every color of the rainbow."

At present, the idea is largely inchoate, and Santos is looking for community sponsorship. He's secured a unique type of grant from the East Bay Community Foundation, which will match all the money he raises, dollar for dollar, up to $10,000. Santos introduces his project Sunday, Feb. 21, at **EastSide Cultural Center** (2277 International Blvd., Oakland). The event features live jazz and poetry performances, refreshments, and a no-host bar. 3-5 p.m., free. EastSideArtsAlliance.com

— *Rachel Swan*

To share this story, type: ebx.ly/santos

ATTRACTIONS

Oakland Artisan Marketplace Featuring handmade jewelry, sculpture, ceramics, paintings, photography, dolls, soaps, clothing, floral arrangements, greeting cards, and more. Info: 510-238-4900. Fridays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., free. Frank Ogawa Plaza, @ 14th and Broadway sts., Oakland.

Redwood Valley Railway Twelve-minute scenic journey by steam train through the redwoods of Tilden Regional Park. Info: 510-548-6100. Saturdays, Sundays, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., $2 per ticket, or 5 tickets for $8. Tilden Regional Park, entrance off Wildcat Canyon Rd. and Grizzly Peak Blvd., Berkeley. 510-526-2233.

University of California Botanical Garden See plants you won't find anywhere and more than 12,000 varieties, in fact. Free docent tours Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 1:30 p.m., open daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free admission on the first Thursday of every month. Daily. UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, 200 Centennial Dr., Berkeley. 510-643-2755, BotanicalGarden.berkeley.edu.

FAIRS, FESTIVALS & FUND RAISERS

Drum Circle for Public & Hands-On Fundraiser With Jeb Smerthers, Kathy Quan, Renee Sennett, and Susan Jette. Wed., Feb. 17, 7 p.m., $10-$20. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568, LaPena.org.

German Family Karneval Party hosted by the German International School of Silicon Valley features a parade, music, entertainment, arts & crafts for children, a silent auction, and German food. For info, visit GISSV.org. Sat., Feb. 20, 12-2 p.m., free. Unitarian Universalist Church, 1 Lawson Rd., Kensington. 510-525-0302, UUCK.org.

Heart & Dagger Saloon Grand Opening Fri., Feb. 19, 8 p.m.; Sat., Feb. 20, noon, free. Heart & Dagger Saloon, 504 Lake Park Ave., Oakland.

Neighborhood Clothing Exchange Bring gently used clothing, shoes, and costume jewelry to swap. Sun., Feb. 21, 1-4:30 p.m., free. Capoeira Brotherhood Academy, 4137 Piedmont Ave., Oakland. Mandinga.org.

KIDS

Black History Month Celebration With storytelling, quiltmaking, and Ji! to Wasaa performing African dance, music, and drumming. Sun., Feb. 21, 1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m., $8.50. Habitot Children's Museum, 2065 Kittredge St., Berkeley. 510-647-1111, Habitot.org.

Got Your Game On? PlayStation2 and Wii Games on the big screen. Wed., Feb. 24, 3 p.m., free. Hayward Public Library, Weekes Branch, 27300 Patrick Ave., Hayward. 510-293-8685, Library.Hayward-ca.gov.

The Great Smoothie Challenge Smoothie-making competition for kids ages 12-18, with prizes. Wed., Feb. 24, 1-3 p.m., free. Hayward Public Library, 835 C St., Hayward. 510-293-8685, Library.Hayward-ca.gov.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Opening Liberally Political discussion group. Third Sunday of every month, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; Third Wednesday of every month, 6-8 p.m.; First Sunday of every month, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; First Wednesday of every month, 6-8 p.m. Continues through Dec. 31, free. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 2221 Broadway, Oakland. 510-451-4677, LukasOakland.com.

Shotokan Karate Grand Opening Sun., Feb. 21, 1 p.m., free. Shotokan Karate of Fremont, 37420 Centralmont Pl., Fremont.

SPORTS & OUTDOORS-PARTICIPATORY

Adult Drop-in Sports Schedule Monday badminton, table tennis, and volleyball 12-2 p.m.; Tuesday basketball 6:30-8:30 a.m. and 12-2 p.m.; Wednesday basketball and volleyball 12-2 p.m.; Thursday

PICKS

Mixed Media Collage Mixer

Famous for its kid-friendly art challenges and Mr. Potato Head beauty pageants, the **Museum of Children's Art** (538 Ninth St., Oakland) has a new offering for adults. Its special adult art night series offers a chance for the 21-and-over crowd to try something different on Thursdays. January's edition featured beading and embroidery: participants got to make their own jewelry or add embellishments to stuff they'd bought from a department store. This month's event is a **mixed media collage mixer**, where folks will make personal scrapbooks or shrines out of old photos and keepsakes. Beer and wine will be available, and first-time dabblers are welcome. It's a terrific way to bring nightlife into the craft realm. *Thursday, Feb. 18, 7:30-10:30 p.m. $5. MOCHA.org — Rachel Swan*

Food Justice Event

Cookbook author and food activist **Bryant Terry** made a splash last year by publishing *Vegan Soul Kitchen*, a compendium of healthy "remixes" inspired by traditional southern cuisine. Terry said he reluctantly used the term "vegan" on the advice of an editor, since he's actually pulled in a different direction than many crusaders from the vegan and vegetarian movements. His grand plan is to make nutritious ingredients more accessible in poor urban communities, and present locally sourced vegetarian food in a way that's palatable to the hip-hop generation. (Hence the titles of his recipes, which range from "Sweet, Sweetback's Salad" to "Soul on Ice pops.") Along those lines, Terry also hosts events that feature hearty vegan cuisine as part of the entertainment. The next one happens Sunday, Feb. 21, at **La Peña Cultural Center** (3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley), featuring a dance performance by choreographer **Amara Tabor-Smith**. The **Food Justice Series** continues with events in March and April. 7 p.m. $15. LaPena.org — *R.S.*

Skank Bloc Bologna Number Four

Semina was the journal created, copied and distributed by Beat era performer and champion of artists Wallace Berman. A precursor to the modern zine, it placed the work of established writers, artists, and poets alongside that of young up-and-comers. *The New York Times* recently characterized it as "distinctively trippy, sardonic West Coast surrealism." The legacy of *Semina* is the inspiration for **Skank Bloc Bologna Number Four**, which takes place Friday, Feb. 19, at **Berkeley Art Museum** (2626 Bancroft Way, Berkeley). The event will include a reenactment of Jack Goldstein's *Two Fencers* by members of the Cal Fencing Club, a screening of *Ostia*, a Scritti Politti cover band, and DJ Citizen Zane spinning ska, opera, and more. Kick-off at 6 p.m., event starts at 7:30 p.m. $5, free for UCB students, faculty and staff. BAMPFA.berkeley.edu — *Tessa Stuart*

Wallace Berman.

Cal Baseball

Forget the end of spring. The Cal men's baseball team gets an early jump on the summer game by starting its season this weekend. The **Golden Bears host Southern Utah State** on Friday-Sunday, Feb. 19-21 (Fri. 2:30 p.m., Sat.-Sun. 1:00 p.m.) to launch their 2010 campaign at **Evans Diamond** (Sailbringer Way and Oxford St.). A few years ago, the powers-that-be decided to fix the imbalance that saw teams from temperate climates fit in more games than their rivals from inclement states, so Cal no longer gets a January opener. But it isn't as if the Golden Bears are going to have to muck around in the elements: the first game north of Berkeley won't happen until May. By then, we'll know if Cal baseball can stand the heat. $4-$8. CalBears.com — *Kibby Kleiman*

volleyball 8:30-9:30 p.m. and 12-2 p.m. Friday: badminton, table tennis, and basketball 12-2 p.m. Saturday: 7-10 p.m. Sunday (1st and 3rd): badminton and volleyball 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sunday (2nd and 4th): badminton and table tennis 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Daily. Robert Livermore Community Center, 4444 East Ave., Livermore. 925-373-5700.

Adventuring Off-the-Beaten-Path: A Heart Approach Called "Confluence Seeking" Geologist Greg Michaels shares stories of global adventures in which he sought out significant coordinate locations, i.e. "confluence points," using latitude and GPS. Tue., Feb. 23, 7-8:30 p.m. Free. REI Berkeley, 1338 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley. 510-527-4140, REI.com.

Aikido Classes For info, visit Bayline-Shotokan.org. Saturdays, 8:30 a.m., Mondays, 8 p.m. Continues through Dec. 26. $40/two for 2 classes per week; $55/two for one class per week. Live Oak Center, 1301 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-981-6600.

Bike Tours of Oakland Docent-led tours of Oakland pass through downtown, Fruitvale, the Port of Oakland, West Oakland, Emeryville, or Lake Merritt. Meet at 10th Street entrance at 10 a.m. Information: docentcenter@museumca.org or 510-238-3514. Third Sunday of every month, 10 a.m. Free. Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St., Oakland. 510-238-2200 or museumCA.org.

East Bay Ultimate The East Bay Association presents recreational games of ultimate frisbee at Tom Bates Regional Sports Complex and San Pablo Fields (2000 Mabel St., Berkeley). For info, visit Bayareaultimate.org. Tuesdays, Thursdays, 6:15 p.m. Continues through Feb. 25. $50. Tom Bates Regional Sports Complex, 400 Gilman St., Berkeley.

Bowling Night Special fee breaks. Advance for women. Info: 510-848-2373 ext. 222. Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. $30 to walk, $65 for a cart. $5 of each purchase will benefit the American Heart Association. Tilden Park Golf Course, Grizzly Peak and Shasta Rd., Berkeley. 510-848-7373. TildenParkGolf.com.

Lunchtime Drop-in Gym Special Head over to RLCC Gym, 4444 East Ave., Livermore, for a lunchtime special: $50 for a 20-visit pass, or $2.50 per visit. Info: 925-373-5731. Mondays-Fridays, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Metro Ladies Golf Group Membership includes organized play days weekly (Wednesdays), two free rules seminars offered annually, quarterly ladies' golf clinics at a discounted rate, and one free medium bucket of range balls be played monthly. Wednesdays, 8 a.m. $85 Berkeley, with play days costing $28 walking, $35 riding. Metropolitan Golf Links, 10051 Doolittle Dr., Oakland. 510-569-5555, info@playmetro.com, PlayMetro.com.

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WTB Presents: An Evening with Willie Weir Lecture by cyclist, author and columnist in *Adventure Cycling* magazine. Fri., Feb. 19, 7 p.m. $5-$10, $25 annual WTB membership (including event ticket). Humanist Hall, 390 27th St., Oakland. 510-451-5818, HumanistHall.net.

SPORTS-SPECTATOR

Golden State Warriors Vs. Sacramento Kings NBA basketball. Wed., Feb. 17, 7:30 p.m. $15-$250. 1-888-GSW-HOOP. Atlanta.com. ORACLE Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. 510-569-2121.

Golden State Warriors Vs. Utah Jazz NBA basketball. Fri., Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m. $15-$250. 1-888-GSW-HOOP. Warriors.com. ORACLE Arena. 510-569-2121.

Golden State Warriors Vs. Atlanta Hawks NBA basketball. Sun., Feb. 21, 5 p.m. $15-$250. Warriors.com. ORACLE Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. 510-569-2121.

Golden State Warriors Vs. Philadelphia 76ers NBA basketball. Tue., Feb. 23, 7:30 p.m. $15-$250. 1-888-GSW-HOOP. Warriors.com. ORACLE Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. 510-569-2121.

UC Berkeley Women's Basketball Vs. Oregon State at Haas Pavilion, UC Berkeley campus. Thu., Feb. 18, 8 p.m. $5-$12. 800-GO-BEARS, Calbears.ocsnsports.com. Haas Pavilion, UC Berkeley, Berkeley. 510-642-0580.

UC Berkeley Women's Basketball Vs. Oregon at Haas Pavilion, UC Berkeley campus. Sat., Feb. 20, 8 p.m. $5-$12. 800-GO-BEARS, Calbears.ocsnsports.com. Haas Pavilion, UC Berkeley, Berkeley. 510-642-0580.

UC Berkeley Golden Bears Vs. Southern Utah State Feb. 19-21. $4-$8. Evans Diamond, at UC Berkeley, Berkeley.

Submissions for calendar listings should be e-mailed to Calendar@EastBayExpress.com or mailed to Calendar Editor, East Bay Express, 620 3rd St., Oakland, CA, 94607. Deadline is 14 days prior to the event date.

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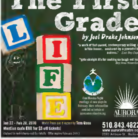
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MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Dave Meeker's "Unintended Consequences: Rio de Janeiro"

Rude Mechanicals

Dave Meeker's sculptures do the old in-out

In 1738, the inventor Jacques Vaucanson exhibited "an artificial Duck made of gilded copper which drinks, eats, quacks, splashes about on the water, and digests his food like a living duck." The lever-driven mechanism was a sensation in Paris, drawing praise from even Voltaire. Unfortunately, the only image we have is a nineteenth-century photograph of it (or of a ruined copy made by a German clockmaker) depicting a plucked, skeletal, metal bird standing, featherless wings outstretched, atop a mechanical apparatus with gears the size of tree trunks.

Dave Meeker would have applauded the automaton, too: as a child obsessed with mechanical life, he dreamt of becoming a robot himself. As an adult sculptor, he now chooses to "bring to life [the discarded and invisible] dead objects" of contemporary industrial society. In his 2005-07 series *Breathe*, he equips plastic bags and condoms with motorized artificial respiration, combining the modernist traditions of kinetic art, assemblage/collage, and sex machine imagery (from Dada and Surrealism). The most egregiously funny of these works is "Dandy," a trio of mechanical dandelions with blooming/wilting latex petals, and a title referring to the Parisian dandies and boulevardiers of the 19th century, affluent types who supported modern art and should have used protection. An array of condoms similarly grows and dies in "Fescue," named after the popular variety of grass, and "Resurrection Fern (Big Slab)," named after the epiphytic air plant *Polypodium polypodioides*. Erectile function continues in "Balloon Time Jack," a set of telescoping cardboard boxes that lengthens into an oedipal edifice (with setbacks) and collapses into itself like a Chinese coiled paper yo-yo. More strictly botanical in feeling are "Lupine (Blue Hawaii)" and "Grape/Raisin," respectively cycling through growth and decay, or plump juiciness and desiccation.

Earlier works dating from the 1970s and 1980s satirize religion and politics. "Unintended Consequences: Rio de Janeiro" lets viewers deluge a souvenir statue of Christ the Redeemer, arms extended, crosslike, with air-tossed foam, suggesting an electrically powered snow globe. "Unintended Consequences: Washington DC" lets viewers switch on powerful lights, heating up the thermometer mercury in the Washington Monument souvenir. Even more scathing are "Housewife," with its crumpled sex doll in her house-shaped vitrine awaiting rejuvenation from an attached Electrolux vacuum cleaner, and "American Handicapped, Deaf, Dumb and Blind," a simulated white marble bust (made from Parisian toilet paper) of a bald or hooded man with his eyes and mouth stitched shut. *Plugged In 1978-2009* runs through February 27 at **Mercury 20 Gallery** (25 Grand Ave., Oakland). 510-701-4620 or MercuryTwenty.com

— *DeWitt Cheng*

To share this story, go to: ebx.ly/ja/meeker

ART GALLERIES

57th Street Gallery, Grandmothers: A Celebration of Feminist History Featuring work by Anne Hughes, [illegible], Claire Gray, Marvin Mohler, [illegible], Carla Riley, Lanelle Abel, Jill Bond, Michelle Stanley, Donna Carter, Eloise Lutz, Suzanne Carey, and Michael McDonough. Through Feb. 27. 5701 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-654-8874, 57thStreetGallery.com.

Actual Cafe, Getting There Photography by Christopher Hall featuring made-to-order arm warmers by B Spoke Tailor. Through Feb. 28. free. 6334 San Pablo Ave., Oakland. 510-735-5080, ActualCafe.com.

Addison Street Windows Gallery, Re-formed!: Found Object Art Through Feb. 28. 2018 Addison St., Berkeley. 510-981-7546.

Alphonse Berber Gallery, Works That Howl at the Moonlight Show focusing on the grotesque and the sublime, featuring work by Anne Richinger, Angie Crabtree, Julia US Frew, Jessica Warner, Kim Winger, Maja Ruznic, and Kasiet Kahee. Through March 27. 2546 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510-883-1560.

Berkeley Art Center, Process & Residue: The Transformative Potential of Artist Residencies Featuring work by [illegible], Amy Kark, Edith Hillinger, [illegible], Anna Lambert, Mary Curtis Ratcliff, and Elizabeth Shaw, who all attended the same residency program in New Zealand. Through March 28. free. 1275 Walnut St. (in Live Oak Park), Berkeley. 510-644-6893, BerkeleyArtCenter.org.

The Berkeley Art Center and [illegible] Featuring photographs by [illegible]. Through Feb. 28. 2015 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley.

Blankspace, Newborn/Anywhere A solo exhibition of new work by Stewart Pittman. Through March 14. **I'm Sorry, Brown Cartoons for Sale** Featuring work by Alexis Bindler, [illegible], [illegible], Alec Gary, Helena Keeble, Crystal Arrasa, [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], Leah Rosenberg, [illegible], [illegible], Anna Whitehead, and [illegible]. Through March 14. 6608 San Pablo Ave., Emeryville. 510-547-8008, BlankspaceGallery.com.

Boloca Gallery, [illegible]: Solo exhibit of Karen Gallagher Printed and hand-drawn works made with an "alchemical" process. Opening reception Thurs., Feb. 18, 6-8 p.m. Feb. 18-April 2. 456 17th St. Ste #205, Oakland. Boloca.org.

Cal State East Bay Arts and Education Building, Recent Art Faculty Exhibition Featuring work by Kristin Becker, [illegible], Lanier Graham, Malka Helfman, Michael Hanninger, Bryan Higgins, Phillip Hofstetter, Scott Hayward, Paty Kavanaugh, Rik LeClaire, Lisa Levine, Mark Levy, Grace Munakata, Paulo Pereira, James Saran, [illegible], Lisa Solomon, Hal Stewart, Suzy Watt, and Sharon Wickham. Through Feb. 21. 25800 Carlos Bee Blvd., Hayward. (510) 885-3050.

Chandra Cerrito Contemporary, 8 Potential Ways to Kiss the Ground Installations and 3D drawings by Marc Andrews and Sheila Ghidini, combining natural and man-made materials. Through March 10. free. 25 Grand Ave., Oakland. 415-577-1534, ChandraCerrito.com.

The Compound, La-Lucire: Work by Barbara Nelson & Maika Ware Closing Tea, Sunday, March 14th, 3-6 p.m. Through March 14. 6604 San Pablo Ave., Oakland. 510-601-9000, TheCompoundGallery.com.

Crown Point Press, The Bottom: A Street Exhibition Featuring work by Chris [illegible], [illegible], Amy Sillman, Edgar Bryan, Enrique Chagoya, [illegible] Clements, June Felter, Eric Fischl, Robert Bechtle, Alex Katz, Jochem [illegible], [illegible], David Salle, [illegible] Smith, and [illegible]. Through Feb. 27. free. 20 Hawthorne St., San Francisco. 415-974-6273, CrownPoint.com.

David Brower Center, The Lake Project: Brower by David Brower Through May 31. **The Lake Project: Photographs by David [illegible]** Photographs of Owens Lake, a 200 square mile body of water on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. Through May 31. 2150 Allston Way, Berkeley.

EBMUD Gallery, Cathy Foster: Oakland, Reflections Photography exhibit. Through March 19. free. 375 11th St., Oakland.

M&G

510-231-1380.

El Cerrito City Hall: [illegible] Showcasing 2 and 3-D [illegible] paintings. Through March 1. 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito. ElCerrito.org.

Expressions Gallery: [illegible] Featuring work by [illegible]. Through April 10. 2035 Ashby Ave., Berkeley. 510-644-4930. ExpressionsGallery.org.

[illegible] Gallery: Winter [illegible] Show With photography, paintings, [illegible], greeting cards, decorative gourds, and jewelry. Through May [illegible] 22654 Main St., Hayward. 510-538-2[illegible]

[illegible] Art Gallery: [illegible] [illegible] show of "The Art of Living Black," featuring work by [illegible] Thomas and [illegible]. Through March 18. 5741 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. [illegible].org.

Johansson Projects: [illegible] Featuring work by [illegible] and [illegible] Lewis. Through [illegible] 20. Free. 2300 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-444-9140. JohanssonProjects.com.

Joyce Gordon Gallery: [illegible] A Celebration of [illegible] All-female exhibition and performance series, featuring [illegible] dance, monologues, and [illegible]. Through March 20. $5-$10 for performances. 406 14th St., Oakland. 510-465-8928. JoyceGordonGallery.com.

[illegible] & The Garden, [illegible] & Berkeley Paintings by [illegible] McCloud. Through March 2. 1223 Park St., Alameda. 510-[illegible]. [illegible].com.

[illegible] Art [illegible] [illegible] installation by Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison. Through Feb. 20. **Transformative [illegible]** Panel [illegible] by [illegible]. Sat., Feb. 20, 2 p.m. Free. [illegible] Ave., Berkeley. 510-540-[illegible]. [illegible].org.

[illegible] [illegible] paintings by [illegible]. Through March [illegible]. [illegible] 8th St., first floor, Oakland. 510-[illegible]

Berkeley [illegible] Gallery: [illegible] 1970-2000 Works by [illegible]. Through Feb. 21. Free. **[illegible]** Sculpture, painting, and mixed media by Margaret [illegible], Kathleen King, Jill McLennan, and Charlie Milgrim. Through Feb. 21. Free. **Works on Paper** Featuring work by [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], Laura [illegible], Anna Vaughan and Joan [illegible]. Through Feb. 21. Free. 25 Grand Ave., Oakland. 510-444-7766. [illegible].com.

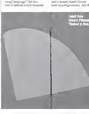
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Offices: Paintings [illegible] Paintings by [illegible]. Through April 15. Free. 101 8th St., Oakland. 510-464-[illegible]

MOCHA — [illegible] of Children's Art: [illegible] Adult art and craft night. [illegible]. Thu., Feb. [illegible], [illegible] p.m. $6. 538 9th St., Oakland. 510-465-8770. MOCHA.org.

PICKS

Nowhere/Anywhere

Painter Stewart Pittman writes, "Minimalism no longer has a single look and so there any number of artists might cite the reductive impulse as a component of their practice. In a culture [illegible] [illegible] defined by [illegible] excess, it seems reasonable that artists would adopt a counteractive visual language." Art history is indeed a rich compost pile of visual elements, and half of Pittman's paintings, hard-edged with unreflected surfaces, clearly derive from geometric abstractionists like Ellsworth Kelly and Josef Albers. However, his [illegible] in capturing the [illegible] walls [illegible] and windows of Oakland, *nowhere/anywhere* "anonymous, stark, and quiet," caused him to abandon mechanical perfection in works like "Swoop [illegible] Phantom," and "Slunderous Bastard," featuring scrambled, uneven surfaces and a looser, hand-drawn (not taped) geometry. Are the elements inherently [illegible] realist? The classical Jekyll and the romantic Hyde are of two minds. *Nowhere/Anywhere* runs through March 14 at Blankspace Gallery (6608 San Pablo Ave., Oakland). 510-547-6808 or BlankspaceGallery.com. — *DeWitt Cheng*



Detail from Stewart Pittman's "Tubed in Red."

Cynosure

A [illegible] [illegible] all eyes, and this [illegible] at UC Berkeley art department's gallery, subtitled "New Work from East Bay Galleries," may be just that: showcasing thirtysomething emerging local artists selected by the [illegible] galleries in consultation with curator **Anu Vikram**. The range of creativity in style, medium, and even aesthetic philosophy is wide, so anyone seeking to catch up on The School of Oakland would do well to saunter across Bancroft Way from the Berkeley Art Museum Tuesday through Saturday between noon and 5 p.m. Participating galleries include Alphonse Berber, Art@theOakbook, Blankspace, Chandra Cerrito, Hatch, Johansson Projects, Pueblo Nuevo, Rowan Morrison, Swarm, Terminal 32, and Areaeleven Gallery & Project Space. The project room features an [illegible] light-and-sound piece best left to the stout-hearted. *Cynosure* runs through February 21 at **Worth Ryder Gallery** (116 Kroeber Hall, UC Berkeley). 510-642-2582 or Art.Berkeley.edu. — *D.C.*

Group [illegible] paintings inspired by the animal kingdom. Through March 19. Free. 556 [illegible] St., Richmond. 510-620-6790. [illegible].org.

[illegible] Creativity Center: The World, [illegible] Photography exhibit featuring work by [illegible] and [illegible]. Art [illegible] reception [illegible] 5-8 p.m. Through March 18. Free. 641 25th St., Oakland.

Photolab Gallery: [illegible] and [illegible] Portraits Sheila Newbery presents black & white and color photographs. Through Feb. 28. Free. 2235 Fifth St., Berkeley. 510-644-1400. [illegible].com.

Pro Arts Gallery: [illegible] Pro Arts. Through Feb. 20. [illegible] Plaza, Oakland. 510-763-4361.

[illegible] Photographic: [illegible] Photography [illegible] by [illegible]

featuring selections from her [illegible] "[illegible]," "History," and "[illegible] of Heritage." Through Feb. 21. [illegible] Third St., San Francisco. 415-495-3175. [illegible].com.

Royal [illegible] Gallery: [illegible] Group exhibition curated by [illegible], featuring tools and materials from Anthony [illegible], Lydia [illegible], [illegible], Trevor [illegible], [illegible], Suzanna Taylor, and Andrew [illegible]. Through March [illegible]. 4301 Telegraph Ave., Oakland.

Sacred Rose Tattoo/SRT Gallery: [illegible] Show Through March 28. 3718 Grand Ave., Oakland. 510-[illegible]. [illegible].com.

[illegible]: [illegible] Show by [illegible] [illegible] memorial for a deceased pet [illegible]. Through March 8. Free. 5631 San Pablo Ave.

[illegible].com.

[illegible] Gallery: [illegible] New work by [illegible] and [illegible]. Through Feb. 21. Free. 4110 Telegraph Ave., Oakland.

[illegible]: [illegible] Painting installation. Through Feb. 22. Free. [illegible] St., Oakland. 510-[illegible]

[illegible] Gallery: [illegible] Installations by [illegible]. Through March 14. Free. **[illegible]** Etchings by [illegible]. Through March 14. Free. **[illegible]** [illegible] installation by [illegible] Anderson. Through March 14. Free. 660 2nd St., Oakland. 510-[illegible]. [illegible].com.

Townsend Center: [illegible] Presenting painting, photography, and [illegible]. Through May 1. 220 Stephens Hall, UC Berkeley, Berkeley. 510-643-9670. TownsendCenter.Berkeley.edu.

[illegible] Artspace: [illegible] [illegible] Ashley [illegible], [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] 2D and 3D work. Through Feb. [illegible]. Free. 768 40th St., Oakland. [illegible].com.

Worth Ryder Gallery: Cynosure Group show curated by Anu Vikram, featuring work from local galleries Alphonse Berber, Art@theOakbook, Blankspace, Chandra Cerrito, Hatch, Johansson Projects, Pueblo Nuevo, Rowan Morrison, Swarm, [illegible] 32, and Areaeleven Gallery & Project Space. Through Feb. 21. 116 Kroeber Hall, Berkeley. 510-642-2582.

MUSEUMS

Asian Art Museum: [illegible] [illegible] from the museum's collection represent an introduction to the major cultures of Asia. Daily. 200 Larkin St., San Francisco. 415-581-3500. AsianArt.org.

Asian Art [illegible] of San Francisco: Shanghai Exhibit features 130 [illegible], including [illegible] paintings, Shanghai deco furniture, apparel, film clips, revolutionary posters, and [illegible]. Through Sept. 5. 200 Larkin St., San Francisco. (415)581-3500.

[illegible]: 3 Days with [illegible] Ginsberg The museum's ongoing [illegible] to never-before-seen [illegible] of [illegible], Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti and playwright [illegible] McClure, by photographer [illegible]. Daily. 540 [illegible] St., San Francisco. 1-800-[illegible]-6622. [illegible].org.

Berkeley Art Museum: [illegible] Shanghai: Photography on the Eve of Revolution Through [illegible]. **Berkeley [illegible]** With a [illegible] of Jack Goldstein's two [illegible] by Laura Glass and Keith Hong, a [illegible] of [illegible] by [illegible], a [illegible] by Eugene [illegible], and [illegible] Point, [illegible] featuring [illegible], Scott [illegible], and [illegible]. Plus [illegible] [illegible], open, and [illegible]. Fri. Feb. 19, 8 p.m. $5. 2626 Bancroft Ave., Berkeley. 510-642-0808. BAMPFA.Berkeley.edu.

Blackhawk Museum: [illegible] [illegible] automobiles from [illegible], circa [illegible], on display. Daily. 3700 Blackhawk Plaza Cir., Danville. 925-736-2280. BlackhawkMuseum.org.

Exploratorium: [illegible] of Life A [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] examining the fundamental [illegible] common to all living things. Daily. 3601 Lyon St., San Francisco. 415-561-0360. Exploratorium.edu.

[illegible] Oakland, a [illegible] Shop: [illegible] The [illegible], *Shel [illegible]*, *The Big* [illegible], *The Missing Piece*. Daily. 2065 Kittredge St., Berkeley. 510-841-[illegible]. [illegible].org.

[illegible] Museum of [illegible]: [illegible] Meet the permanent collection, a collection of [illegible] from China, Egypt, and Peru, plus [illegible] in Africa, North America, and the Mediterranean. Daily. **Native Californian [illegible]** The "visible storage" exhibition comprises some 500 [illegible] from the museum's collection of native California Indians. Daily. Kroeber Hall, Berkeley. 510-643-7648. HearstMuseum.Berkeley.edu.

[illegible] of [illegible] Art: California Mosaic [illegible] Celebrating Diversity through [illegible] An ongoing group show. Daily. **[illegible] Art: [illegible]** A celebration of [illegible] in mosaic. Daily. 3891 [illegible] St., Oakland. 510-[illegible]. [illegible].com.

Lawrence Hall of Science: [illegible] Gallery (SOS) New permanent [illegible] features an animated globe. Watch hurricanes [illegible], tsunamis sweep across the oceans, and city lights glow around the planet. Daily. $8-$12. 1 Centennial Dr., Berkeley. 510-642-5132. LawrenceHallofScience.org.

Legion of Honor: [illegible] and [illegible] Jewelry exhibition featuring work by Cartier, who was known as "King of Jewelers" during the [illegible]. Through April 18. 34th Ave. and Clement St., San Francisco. 415-750-3600. LegionofHonor.org.

Judah L. Magnes Museum: [illegible] Multimedia works from the museum's [illegible] collections of [illegible]. [illegible] and experimental films. Daily. **Memory Lab** [illegible] allows visitors to [illegible] digital family [illegible] and [illegible], based on their own documents, photographs, and [illegible]. Daily. 2911 Russell St., Berkeley. 510-549-6950. Magnes.org.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: [illegible] and Beyond: The Painting and Sculpture Collection Pieces from the museum's holdings, including work by Rothko, Mondrian, Klee, Rauschenberg, Richard Diebenkorn, et al. Daily. **[illegible] Art and Life: The Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Collection** Large-scale installations and multi-panel [illegible] from the museum's collection. Daily. **The Art of Design: The Architecture and Design Collection** An ongoing presentation of works of architecture, graphic design, and industrial design. Daily. **Picturing Modernity: The Photography Collection** From the museum's vast holdings, photos by Adams, Cunningham, Evans, Lange, Stieglitz, et al. Daily. 151 3rd St., San Francisco. 415-357-4000. SFMOMA.org.

USS [illegible] Museum: [illegible] [illegible] retired by volunteers. Daily. **[illegible] Experience** Photos and memorabilia telling the story of the nisei (second-generation Japanese-American) troops who fought for the US in WWII. [illegible] Pier 3, Alameda. 510-521-8448 x 243. USSHornet.org.

Zeum: [illegible] A hands-on museum for kids that provides safe access to arts, media, and technology. Daily. 221 4th St., San Francisco. 415-777-2800. Zeum.org.

More Listings Online

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Let Freedom Ring

A Musical Celebration of the Journey from Slavery to Freedom

featuring two of the Bay Area's finest choirs

Cantare Chamber Ensemble & Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

Saturday, February 20th at 7:30PM
Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church
49 Knox Drive, Lafayette

Sunday, February 21st at 5:00PM
First Congregational Church
27th & Harrison Streets, Oakland

Tickets $25 General, $20 Senior, $10 Youth
Purchase tickets at our website www.[illegible].org
or call (510) 548-[illegible]

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THEATER & DANCE

COMEDY

[illegible] Sat., Feb. 20, 7:30 p.m., $15. Tommy T's Comedy & Steakhouse, 5104 Hopyard Rd., Pleasanton. 925-227-1800.

[illegible] Murphy Wed., Feb. 17, 7 p.m., $8, free for students. Cal State East Bay University Theatre, 25800 Carlos Bee Blvd., Hayward. CSUEastBay.edu.

Damon Wayans Jr. Thu., Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m., Fri., Feb. 19, 7:30 & 9:30 p.m., Sat., Feb. 20, 7 & 9:30 p.m., Sun., Feb. 21, 7 p.m., $19-$30. Tommy T's Comedy & Steakhouse, 5104 Hopyard Rd., Pleasanton, 925-227-1800.

[illegible] Wed., Feb. 24, 7:30 p.m., $17. Tommy T's Comedy & Steakhouse, 5104 Hopyard Rd., Pleasanton. 925-227-1800.

Stand-Up Comedy Night at the Layover Tuesdays, 8:30 p.m. Continues through June 1, free. Layover Music Bar & Lounge, 1517 Franklin St., Oakland. 510-834-1188. OaklandLayover.com.

DANCE-PERFORMANCE

Evelyn Thomas Jazz Dance Company Performing [illegible]. Fri., Feb. 19, 8 p.m., $12-$18. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568. LaPena.org.

So U Think U Can Dance & Draw Sat., Feb. 27, 4-5:30 p.m., $1-$10. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568. LaPena.org.

The Ties that [illegible] Us [illegible] Series highlighting Spanish, Arab, African and Indigenous influences in music and dance in the Americas. Curated by Gabriela Shearer of De Rompe y Raja. First installment, "Marlén de Manila," [illegible] on seven shawls. Sat., Feb. 20, 8 p.m., $15-$18. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568. LaPena.org.

LIVE VARIETY

[illegible] [illegible] premiere John Santos [illegible] his new project, in which he [illegible] Afro-Latino connections through music and poetry. Sun., Feb. 21, 3-5 p.m., free, donations accepted. East-Side Cultural Center, 2277 International Blvd., Oakland. 510-533-6629.

THEATER & PERFORMING ARTS

An Anonymous Story New [illegible] of Anton Chekhov's novella [illegible] an ailing revolutionary who poses as a government lackey. Adapted for the stage by Gary Graves and [illegible] by Susan [illegible]. Starting Feb. 19. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m., Sundays, 5 p.m. Continues through March 20. $14-$25. Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant Ave., Berkeley. 510-848-[illegible]. BerkeleyCityClub.com.

Antigone [illegible] Ensemble of Berkeley premiere Jean Anouilh's 1946 version of Sophocles' tragedy, [illegible] Grace Coughlan-Barron. Fridays-Saturdays, 8 p.m., Thu., Feb. 18, 8 p.m. Continues through Feb. 20. $10-$15. Live Oak Theatre, 1301 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-841-5580.

Berkeley Opera: Giovanni [illegible] With [illegible] in the title role, [illegible] as Leporello, [illegible] as Donna Elvira, Kaileen Miller as Donna Anna, and [illegible] playing Don Ottavio. Susan Swerdlow directs the Berkeley Opera Chorus. More info at BerkeleyOpera.org. Sat., Feb. 20, 8 p.m., Fri., Feb. 26, 8 p.m., Sun., Feb. 28, 2 p.m. $15-$30. El Cerrito Performing Arts Theater, 540 Ashbury Ave., El Cerrito.

The Bright River: A Mass Transit Tour of the Afterlife Play by Tim Barsky, with music by Carlos Aguirre, Kevin Carnes, and Alex Kelly. Directed by Jessica Heidt. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m. Continues through Feb. 20. $17-$35. Brava Theater Center, 2781 24th St., San Francisco. 415-641-7657. Brava.org.

Brimstone Musical [illegible] and set in Northern Ireland. Directed by [illegible] with musical direction by Timothy Hanson. Fridays, Saturdays, 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, 3 p.m. Wednesdays, 3:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays, 1:30 p.m. Continues through Feb. 28. Campbell Theatre, 636 Ward St., Martinez. 925-798-1300.

Coming Home West coast premiere of the drama written by Athol Fugard and directed by Gordon Edelstein, through Feb. 28. $13.50-$71. Berkeley Repertory Theatre Thrust Stage, 2025 Addison St., Berkeley. 510-647-2949.

Curtains Diablo [illegible] presents the Northern California premiere of a Broadway musical comedy with songs by John Kander and Fred Ebb. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays, 2 p.m. Continues through Feb. 28. [illegible]. Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. 925-943-7469. DLRCA.org.

[illegible] [illegible] show by [illegible]. Fridays, Saturdays, 8 p.m. Continues through Feb. 27. $10-$15. Laney College Theater, 900 Fallon St., Oakland. [illegible]

Fabric: The Legend of M. Rabinowitz Puppet performance inspired by Yiddish and Russian folklore. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m. Sundays, 2 & 8 p.m. Continues through Feb. 28. $18-$48. The Jewish Theatre, 470 Florida St., San Francisco. 415-864-3541.

The First Grade by Joel Drake Johnson. Directed by Tom Ross. Wednesdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m. Sundays, 2 p.m. Sundays, 7 p.m. Continues through Feb. 28. Aurora Theatre, 2081 Addison St., Berkeley. 510-843-4822. AuroraTheatre.org.

[illegible]: The Secret Life of Girls Around the World Lecture by Eve Ensler. Thu., Feb. 11, 7 p.m. $32. King Middle School Auditorium, 1781 Rose St., Berkeley. 510-644-6280.

Let Freedom Ring! Musical celebration of the African-American odyssey with Contra Costa Chamber Ensemble (under the direction of [illegible]) and [illegible] Interfaith Gospel Choir (under the direction of Terrance Kelly). Sat., Feb. 20, 7:30 p.m., $10-$25. Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Dr., Lafayette. 925-283-8722.

Mahalia: A Gospel Musical Starting Feb. 18. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m., Sundays, 4 p.m., Wed., Feb. 24, 11 a.m. Continues through [illegible]. [illegible]. Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, 650 Sutter St., San Francisco. 415-[illegible]. LHTSF.org.

Over the Tavern Eric [illegible] directs this comedy about a family living in Buffalo, New York during the 1950s. Fridays-Saturdays, 8 p.m., Sundays, 2 p.m. Continues through Feb. 28. $11-$18. Contra Costa Civic Theatre, 951 Pomona Ave., El Cerrito. 510-524-9132. CCCT.org.

Sylvia's Advice on How to Age Gracefully on this Planet Earth Stagebridge Theater production featuring an intergenerational cast. Call 510-444-4755 for more info. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays, 2 p.m. Continues through Feb 21. $10-$15. The Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Ave., Berkeley. 510-841-[illegible]. ShotgunPlayers.org.

The Syringa Tree Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m., Sundays, 2:30 p.m., Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m., Sat., Feb. 27, 2:30 p.m. Continues through Feb. 28. Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. 925-943-7469. DLRCA.org.

PICKS

ahdance's Home Season

Among the most promising, innovative small dance ensembles in the East Bay is Abigail Hosein's **ahdance**, whose home season at **Shawl-Anderson Dance Center** (2704 Alcatraz Ave., Berkeley) marks its eighth year of investigating the human psyche through modern dance and multimedia collaboration. **"Here Birds"** comprises six pieces that reflect on human relationships in a chaotic world, performed in an intimate setting as part of the Dance Up Close/East Bay series. ahdance will perform to new music by Oakland's **[illegible]** while sharing the stage with **Oakland Poetry Slam's Aaron [illegible]** and **Nazelah Jamison** for a premiere piece. Fridays-Sundays, Feb. 19-21 and 26-28. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., [illegible] p.m. $15-$20. Advance tickets are recommended. 510-654-[illegible], ahdance.org, or BrownPaperTickets.com — *Claudia Bauer*

The Bright River

Having spent part of his career as a fire juggler, theologian, Chassidic folklorist, storyteller, and flutist, Tim Barsky lumped all his skills into a form he calls "urban circus arts." It's an apt description for his new show *The Bright River: A Mass Transit Tour of the Afterlife*, which transforms an old story from Dante into a hip-hop [illegible]. An actor-less production, *Bright River* privileges sound over form. Its current iteration features beatboxer Carlos Aguirre, jazz drummer Kevin Carnes, and cellist Alex Kelly, with Barsky playing a slew of woodwinds and delivering his travelogue in spoken word and mime. The musicians not only create atmosphere, but also animate the story: At one point, Aguirre sets out an entire "conference of birds" using his body as an instrument. "Transit" is not so much a theme as an aural effect, conveyed through the use of scrap metal percussion and electronics. It accords with a brittle, industrial landscape designed by [illegible], and with Barsky's idea of using buses as a metaphor for purgatory. Directed by Jessica Heidt. Through February 20 at **Brava Theater Center** (2781 24th St., San Francisco). $17-$35. Brava.org. — *Rachel Swan*

Coming Home

Like Strindberg or Ibsen, playwright Athol Fugard has a knack for pressure-cooker dramas in which everything leads up to the moment of "too late." More importantly, his plays always shoulder the weight of history — specifically that of his South African homeland. Fugard's latest, *Coming Home*, tells the story of Veronica (Roslyn Ruff), a small-town woman who sets out for the big city (Cape Town), but fails to improve her lot. Veronica returns to her village with a young son, a pernicious secret, and a sack of dead dreams, but finds solace in an old friend, Alfred (Thomas Silcott). Under the direction of Gordon Edelstein, this production wrings all the juice out of Fugard's writing. Through Feb. 28 at **Berkeley Repertory Theatre** (2025 Addison St., Berkeley). $13.50-$71. BerkeleyRep.org. — *R.S.*

The First Grade

It's also easy to believe that first-grade teachers have a life outside the classroom, and Sydney does nothing to undermine the stereotype. Played by Julia Brothers in Joel Drake Johnson's new drama (directed by Tom Ross at Aurora Theatre), Sydney is a dowdy, plain-faced matron with a sweet, neurotic personality. She attempts to apply classroom management skills to all facets of life, from her alcoholic ex-husband, Nat (Warren David Keith) to her bitchy daughter Angie (Rebecca Schweitzer). Such efforts create a lot of dysfunctional family spats, where Sydney is usually the hapless victim. Still, she maintains an [illegible], dispensing vocabulary words and doling out cookies for good behavior. The writing is what anchors *The First Grade*, even though Johnson's efforts to string multiple themes (cultural disconnect, alienation, [illegible] menopause, mother/daughter relationships) make the plot get messy. Through February 28 at **Aurora Theatre** (2081 Addison St., Berkeley). AuroraTheatre.org. — *R.S.*

Black Choreographers Festival

Dance is a vital blade in African-American culture, yet many artists experience a relative dearth of performance opportunities. In response, the **Black Choreographers Festival** offers three weekends of seminars, master classes, and performances by young, up-and-coming and noted African and African-American dance artists. Youth get the focus Friday-Sunday, Feb. 12-14, at **Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts** (1428 Alice St., Oakland) with a dance conference and concert (call for details: 510-283-[illegible]). A family matinee featuring pre-professional youth-dance companies wraps things up on Sunday (4 p.m., $5). **Dance Mission Theater** (3316 24th St., SF) hosts the following two weekends. **Reginald Ray-Savage**, **Raissa Simpson**, and others perform Feb. 19-21 and a dozen burgeoning choreographers show their stuff at the **Next Wave Choreographers Showcase** Feb. 26-28. (Fri., Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m.; $10-$20.) For the master-class schedule, call Dance Mission at 415-826-4441. BCFHereAndNow.com or BrownPaperTickets.com — *Claudia Bauer*

ahdance's Abigail Hosein and Amanda Whitehead

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THEATER REVIEW

ANTIGONE SANS THE DRAMA

Actors Ensemble drains the sex and violence from Sophocles' ancient play

By Rachel Swan

Although it's well over two thousand years old, *Antigone* offers a seemingly inexhaustible supply of lurid pleasures, even for modern audiences. King Oedipus of Thebes kills his father, shags his mother, and pokes his eyes out in shame. Then he dies, bequeathing the throne to two greedy sons whose power struggle induces a huge civil war. From the ashes emerges their sister Antigone — scrawny, straw-haired, and pale but nonetheless stout-hearted. After her brothers kill each other, she decides to single-handedly fight off their uncle Creon, who is next in line for the throne. Not the best move, given that she's also dating Creon's son Haemon. It's a hot mess.

Modern stagings of *Antigone* often use some concept or pop culture theme as a filter. Jon Tracy earned high marks last year with a soap opera version on an all-white set. His title character was a lesbian, her sister was a bitchy shopaholic; the two brothers fought each other with machine guns. This year, director Bruce Coughran dredges up a World War II era version conceived by French playwright Jean Anouilh. Her *Antigone* is an allegory about Nazi-occupied France, in which Creon stands for Fascism, Antigone for the French resistance. Such ideas are largely obfuscated in Coughran's new production, staged under the auspice of Actors Ensemble of Berkeley. Rather than dwell on big themes, this version treats *Antigone* as a potboiler — albeit a dry one. The juicier parts happen offstage.

Heroes and villains materialize from the moment this play begins. The guards play cards at a table, stage left. Eurydice (Victoria F. Siegel) sits knitting on a sofa, stage right. Ismene (played by understudy Allison Blackwell the night I saw this production — Kate Brauneis-Krull normally has the role) sidles against a wall flirting with Haemon (Jose Garcia). A page (Max Kahl) and messenger (Rahn Asm) stand at attention. Antigone (Brianna McWhorter) sits by herself in a frowsy purple gown that looks like an old prom dress. A one-man Greek chorus (Norman Macleod) traverses the stage, describes everybody, and explains their importance in the play. With his striped tie and crisp British accent, Macleod has the most commanding presence of any cast member, and he's the easiest to follow through long stretches of monologue.

Indeed, much of this play is expository. That can be tricky, because the characters are burdened with establishing their own relationships, while relaying complex bits of storyline. The first act largely consists of Ismene and Antigone fussing at each other. It turns out Antigone left the house before dawn to try to give her brother Polynices a proper burial, against Creon's wishes. Ismene, who is supposed to be the more complacent sister, disapproves of Antigone's insubordination. That's a tough thing to get across, because neither actress is that good at conveying a persona. Big-eyed, blond-haired McWhorter doesn't seem like too much of a rebel, and Blackwell isn't a consummate goodie-goodie either. Moreover, Greek notions of honor and burial take a lot of fleshing out. Many audience members will spend the whole first half not understanding the central conflict of the play.

Brianna McWhorter and Lee Vogt

Eric Carlson

Show Details

Antigone runs Thurs.-Sat. (Feb. 18-20), 8 p.m. at Live Oak Theater (1301 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley). $12-$15. AEofBerkeley.org

Things start looking up in the second act with the introduction of Creon (Lee Vogt) and his retinue. Though not an experienced actor, Vogt is good at playing a war profiteer with an accent and ticks. And Creon is undoubtedly the play's best character. Foul-tempered for a tyrant, he often gets riled up and starts slapping a roll of paper against his leg for emphasis. Yet he's obviously good at consolidating power. In fact, Creon's cabinet takes up about half the cast of *Antigone*. Frederick Lem plays the lead guard — a surly, blue-collar type. He speaks in a folksy drawl and uses the present tense to describe past events. The other sentries are card sharks with slicked-back hair and rumpled suits. Poor Kahl, the page, is the smallest and most exploitable. He has to spend entire scenes standing in a far corner, to the point that he becomes a piece of furniture.

Unfortunately, he's more interesting to watch than some of the more prominent cast members. In a play that's supposed to be saturated with sex and violence, it's surprising that the lead characters barely ever touch each other. McWhorter and Garcia share one of the most dispassionate kisses to ever be performed on a Berkeley stage. Vogt gets McWhorter in a half nelson, but somehow maintains a two-foot distance. The actors move stiffly about the stage, more in the fashion of people doing choreography than bringing a story to life.

Shifts in personnel might be partly to blame (in all, the production has two Ismenes, eight Eurydices, and four rotating guards), but more likely it's the result of cast members focusing on line memorization, rather than inhabiting a persona. At some point in the second act, Macleod breaks down the fourth wall and starts pontificating on the cleanness of tragedy. It's a clean form, he says, because it relies on predestination. You know everyone is going to die in the end, so there's no need to get worked up about it. Coughran, tragically, turned that idea into a credo. A better *Antigone* would veer toward melodrama. ●

To share this story, go to: ebx.ly/ac/antigone

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LECTURES & LIT

Roller-Coaster Ride

Living with a bipolar mother was an education in itself for Peggy Kennedy

Peggy Kennedy

Whenever the parents of **Peggy Kennedy**'s classmates at Oakland's St. Louis Bertrand School were sick, the students created and sent get well cards. But when Kennedy's mother went into the hospital — and she was very sick indeed — no one so much as mentioned it. When other people's parents arrived home from the hospital, flowers and banners awaited them. When Kennedy's mother arrived home from the hospital, "no one talked about where she'd just been or why. You'd try to ask her about it and she just clammed up," said Kennedy, whose book *Approaching Neverland: A Memoir of Epic Tragedy and Happily Ever After* charts her experiences as the youngest of a mentally ill woman's five children.

Growing up in the Sixties and Seventies, Kennedy didn't know the phrase "bipolar disorder." She only knew that, sometimes, her mother believed fairy tales were real. That's why, one morning when they should have been leaving for school, Kennedy's mother cajoled the kids to stay home and re-enact *Peter Pan* with her, explaining that she'd "made arrangements with my friends, the Indians," to meet them in Neverland. She'd also left the gas on and kept the windows shut. Had a terrified neighbor not intervened, they might have died.

"We were lucky," said Kennedy, who will be at **Books Inc.** (1760 Fourth St., Berkeley) on Thursday, February 18. "We were a really close family, and we really loved our mom. And we were lucky that it was explained to us very early on that no matter what she said or did, she loved us very much."

Lithium helped to balance her mother's extreme mood swings, which began at age nineteen. But as happens with many bipolar-disorder sufferers, when the medication was working, she often assumed she was cured — and so stopped taking it. Then what Kennedy calls "the roller-coaster ride" would begin again.

Growing up with a fragile and wildly unpredictable parent "made us kids become like soldiers in the trenches. We had to learn to react efficiently to crises and to do it together. Even as a very young kid I learned to watch for warning signs: the jumping eyes, the speeded-up speech." Then again, keen observational skills "are something that ends up serving you very well in your later life."

Approaching Neverland is packed with poignant anecdotes whose sparks of chaos, fear, and shame will feel familiar to many readers. Mental illness affects one in every four American families, said Kennedy, who leads a "Walk for Mom" team as part of an annual fundraiser for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a free advocacy and support organization for mentally ill people and their loved ones.

"I wrote this book because I wanted people to know who my mom was," the San Ramon author said. "I wanted people to love her despite the fact that she was mentally ill. Once someone gets labeled as mentally ill, it becomes their only label, and that's that." 7 p.m., free. BooksInc.com — *Anneli Rufus*

To share this story, go to: ebx.by/pr/kennedy

LECTURES

"Awakening From Buenos Aires 1987" Documentary about Argentina. Wed., Feb. 24, 7:30 p.m., $10. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568, LaPena.org.

The Coup in Honduras: What Happened, Why, and What Role Did the United States Play? Meeting of the El Cerrito Democratic Club features Dale Sorensen of the Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas. Tue., Feb. 23, 6:30 p.m., free, $4 for pizza. El Cerrito United Methodist Church, 6830 Stockton Ave., El Cerrito. 510-525-3500.

Green Building: What's Happening With Our Buildings? Architect Chris Andrews offers tips on LEED building. Sun., Feb. 21, 1-3 p.m., free. Berkeley Friends' Meeting House, 2151 Vine St., Berkeley. 510-843-9725.

Human Rights in Chiapas With speaker Victor Hugo Lopez from Chiapas. Thu., Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m., $5-$10. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568, LaPena.org.

Gabriel Thompson Discussing *Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do*. Wed., Feb. 24, 7 p.m., free. Revolution Books, 2425 Channing Way, Berkeley. 510-848-1196, www.revolutionbooks.org/.

Greil Marcus, Werner Sollors: "A New Literary History of America" Marcus and Sollors discuss and sign *A New Literary History of America*, which, in more than two hundred original essays, brings together 500 years of American voices. Thu., Feb. 18, 7-8:30 p.m., free. Diesel, 5433 College Ave., Oakland. 510-653-9965, DieselBookstore.com.

Jill Hamburg Discussing *Finding Pete: Rediscovering the Brother I Lost in Vietnam*. Tue., Feb. 23, 6 p.m., free. University Press Books, 2430 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510-548-0585, UniversityPressBooks.com.

Joel Kotkin Discussing his book *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*. Thu., Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m., $12-$15. First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley. 510-848-3696.

Ken Mercer Discussing *Slow Fire*. Thu., Feb. 18, 7 p.m., free. A Great Good Place for Books, 6120 LaSalle Ave., Oakland. 510-339-8210, greatgoodplace.indiebound.com/.

Lisa M. Koehl Discussing her poetry. Tue., Feb. 23, 5:30-7 p.m., free. Mills Hall Living Room, Mills College, Oakland. 510-430-2255, www.mills.edu.

Leslie Scalapino and Amy Wolfson Tue., Feb. 23, 7:30 p.m., free. Moe's Books, 2476 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2087, www.moesbooks.com/cgi-bin/moes/index.html.

Linda Joy Myers Reading from *The Power of Memoir: How to Write Your Healing Story* with her editor Alan Rinzler. Sat., Feb. 20, 8 p.m., free. Mrs. Dalloway's Literary and Garden Arts, 2904 College Ave., Berkeley. 510-704-8222, MrsDalloways.com.

Rina Lazarus Discussing *Living Life as a Thank You: The Transformative Power of Daily Gratitude*. Mon., Feb. 22, 7 p.m., free. Books Inc., Berkeley, 1760 4th St.

Paul McHugh Former *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter discusses his book *Deadline: A Novel of Murder, Conspiracy, and the Media*. Thu., Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m., free. Mrs. Dalloway's Literary and Garden Arts, 2904 College Ave., Berkeley. 510-704-8222, MrsDalloways.com.

Peggy Kennedy Discussing *Approaching Neverland*. Thu., Feb. 18, 7 p.m., free. Books Inc., Berkeley, 1760 4th St.

Shirley Gilbert Discussing *The 7 Connections to Happiness and Harmony*. Wed., Feb. 17, 7 p.m., free. A Great Good Place for Books, 6120 LaSalle Ave., Oakland. 510-339-8210, greatgoodplace.indiebound.com/.

Vintage Gardens, Antique and Extraordinary Roses Gardening lecture by Gregg Lowery. Sat., Feb. 20, 8 p.m., free. Mrs. Dalloway's Literary and Garden Arts, 2904 College Ave., Berkeley. 510-704-8222, MrsDalloways.com.

William Issel Discussing *For Both Cross and Flag: Catholic Action, Anti-Catholicism, and National Security Politics in World War II San Francisco*. Wed., Feb. 24, 5-7:30 p.m., free. University Press Books, 2430 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510-548-0585, UniversityPressBooks.com.

Yiyun Li Discussing *The Vagrants*. Wed., Feb. 24, 7 p.m., free. A Great Good Place for Books, 6120 LaSalle Ave., Oakland. 510-339-8210, greatgoodplace.indiebound.com/.

LITERARY EVENTS

Anton Sheldon Reading poetry. Wed., Feb. 17, 7 p.m., free. University Press Books, 2430 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510-548-0585, UniversityPressBooks.com.

Ronald [illegible] Discussing *Mystery of Emptiness and Love: A Buddhist Exploration*. Thu., Feb. 18, 6 p.m., free. University Press Books, 2430 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510-548-0585, UniversityPressBooks.com.

PICKS

Eve Ensler

What she did for body parts, **Eve Ensler** now strives to do for less tangible components of female existence with her new stage show *I Am An Emotional Creature: The Secret Life of Girls Around the World*. Presented by KPFA, this author of *Insecure at Last: Losing It in Our Security-Obsessed World* performs at the **King Middle School auditorium** (1781 Rose St., Berkeley) on Thursday, Feb. 18, 7 p.m., $12-$15. KPFA.org — *Anneli Rufus*

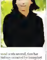
Joel Kotkin

It's going to be crowded in here, as **Joel Kotkin** reports in *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*, an analysis of our expanding population: what it will look like, where it will live, and whether it will thrive. The *Forbes* columnist, whose six other books include *The City* and *The New Geography*, will be at the **First Congregational Church of Berkeley** (2345 Channing Way, Berkeley) on Thursday, Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m., $12-$15. BerkeleyArts.org — *A.R.*

Kamala Harris

Launching the UC Berkeley Center for South Asia Studies' new Sarah Kailath Memorial Lecture series, San Francisco District Attorney **Kamala Harris** gives a talk in the Chevron Auditorium at **International House** (2299 Piedmont Ave., Berkeley) on Sunday, Feb. 21. San Francisco's first ever female DA, Oakland-born Harris is the author of *Smart on Crime: A Career Prosecutor's Plan to Make Us Safer*. 4 p.m., free. SouthAsia.Berkeley.edu — *A.R.*

Yiyun Li


Yiyun Li

Branded a counterrevolutionary, a former Red Guard has her vocal cords severed, then her kidneys extracted for transplant into a Communist Party official. Then she's shot — and her execution is only the beginning of **Yiyun Li**'s grimly beautiful novel *The Vagrants*, which the award-winning author will discuss at **A Great Good Place for Books** (6120 La Salle Ave., Oakland) on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7 p.m., free. GreatGoodPlace.Indiebound.com — *A.R.*

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Omigoddess

Female deities can help us all, says Diana Dorell

Diana Dorell

A few years ago, **Diana Dorell** realized that while her masculine energies were fully functional, her feminine side needed a nudge. "I knew how to get things done — I used to be a high school English teacher in East San Jose — and to work hard and speak my mind," she said. "But I had a hard time receiving and accepting help — that is, being vulnerable." She sought solace in Athena. The ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, war, the arts, and industry inspired Dorell to quit her nine-to-five job, take up dancing again, and go into business for herself. These days, she hosts shows on SoulsJourneyRadio.com and ParanormalTVNetwork.com, performs in films and commercials, teaches monthly "Goddess Dance" classes, and hosts gatherings such as the upcoming **Goddess Circle** at **Angel Light Books & Gifts** (3347 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Berkeley) on Saturday, February 20.

As a toddler, Dorell cherished an imaginary friend whom she called "the Queen," staging elaborate shows that "would always have magical creatures and plenty of crowns, wands, and glitter." Formal ballet study started a few years later. "It felt so natural. So majestic," she said. "I did feel like a queen/goddess and couldn't understand why others around me didn't."

Upon graduating from Northwestern University, she started to take her intuitive skills more seriously. During card readings, for example, she always seemed to know which cards would be drawn, even before the decks were shuffled. Hoping to use this talent to help others, she changed careers, becoming a certified Angel Therapy Practitioner and Reiki Master. "I wanted to create a place, a company, where women could connect with their feminine creative power, but I was stuck on a name," said Dorell. "Then one night, my grandmother Mercy — a Colombian-Indian medicine woman herself, which I didn't know until after she passed — came to me in a dream as a white bird and showed me an image of a beautiful woman dancing on the beach in a white, flowy dress." Upon waking, Dorell knew that she must call her company "Dancing Goddess."

Goddess energy "opens a larger space up for creativity, honoring our divine intuition — which exists in all of us regardless of our gender," she said. Despite being divine, a goddess "never demands power like a tyrant or dictator," but instead "commands power, which comes from a place of leadership and confidence."

Goddesses can also awaken the four elements within us, Dorell avowed. "The fire is where our true passion lies. The water is our sensitivity. The earth is about standing your ground. Air is the ability to communicate. Striking a more harmonious balance between these elements and knowing that the Goddess lives within each of us brings me excitement for where we are headed. We only need to allow ourselves to be guided and surrender to what is." 3 p.m., free; reservations required. AngelLightBooks.com

— Anneli Rufus

To share this story, go to: ebx.hy.pr/dorell

HEALTH & WELLNESS

AIDS Project of the East Bay The Alameda County organization provides free HIV counseling and testing, support groups, care management services, assistance with benefits, transportation, and emergency housing, emergency food vouchers, and more. Volunteer opportunities available. Daily. AIDS Project of the East Bay, 1755 Broadway, Oakland. 510-663-7979. APEB.org.

Bay Street Stroller Strides Fitness program for moms to incorporate power walking, jogging, body toning, and strength and flexibility training into their daily stroll. Info: 800-650-6995, or StrollerStrides.net/eastbay. Fridays, 9:30 a.m. First class is free. $120 for a 10-class pass. Old Navy, 5625 Bay St., Emeryville.

Community Healing Night With workshops and demos by professional healers and bodyworkers. Fourth Wednesday of every month, 7-9 p.m. Continues through Dec. 31. Free. Rhythmix Cultural Works, 2513 Blanding Ave., Alameda, 510-865-5060, Rhythmix.org.

Drug Free Solutions to Handle Stress Lecture by Dr. Lynne Sullivan. Sat., Feb. 20, 9:30 a.m. Free. Bella Flor Hotel and Day Spa, 3770 Castro Valley Blvd., Castro Valley.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Course Eight-week session course led by [illegible]. MindfulnessBasedStress.com. Thursdays, 7 p.m. Continues through March 25. $370. Acupressure Institute, 1533 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley.

Natalie Nakatani's Bone Marrow Donor Drive For info, visit HopeForNatalie.com. Sat., Feb. 20, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. Gregory Gardens Elementary School, 1 Corliss Ct., Pleasant Hill.

Simply Raw: Reversing Diabetes in 30 Days Film screening and Q&A. Mon., Feb. 22, 7-9 p.m. Free. Bauman College, 901 Grayson St., Berkeley, 510-540-7840, www.baumancollege.org.

PERSONAL GROWTH

How to Communicate When It Doesn't Feel Easy Workshop based on compassionate communication techniques developed by Marshall Rosenberg. Sun., Feb. 21, 1-3 p.m. Free; donations welcome. Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, 1924 Cedar St., Berkeley. 510-848-4824. Pages.sbcglobal.net/bfuu.

Mindful Drumming and Meditation Circle Facilitated by Ghanaian drummer Kokomon Clottey. Sat., Feb. 20, 3 p.m. Free. Attitudinal Healing Connection, Inc., 3278 West St., Oakland, 510-652-5530, www.ahc-oakland.org/.

RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

Alta Bates Summit Medical Center's Vascular Rehabilitation Program Instruction on beneficial exercises you can do at home, education on clinically relevant topics, and guided strength training in a supportive group setting. Physician referral required. Orientation takes place at 3030 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley (next to Whole Foods). Info: 510-204-1594. Classes [illegible] days, 10 a.m.; Tuesdays, 11 a.m. $64.

Coping and Thriving After a Diagnosis of Cancer Call 510-869-6833 to register. Second and fourth Tuesday of every month, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Free. Alta Bates Medical Center Summit Campus, 450 30th St., Oakland, 510-869-8736.

Dances of Universal Peace Fri., Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m. $5. Durant House, 2330 Durant Ave., Berkeley.

[illegible] with Lev and Letting Go: Bring Fires for the Shield Season Worship celebration with Cynthia Wetzel-Henry and Maggie Ko[illegible]. Tue., Feb. 23, 11 a.m. $7.50. Free. Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-8206, PSR.edu.

Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Think plus Tibet and Women Documentary screening, followed by a conversation with Dr. John Esposito. Sat., Feb. 20, 4:30-7:30 p.m., $10-$15. Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California, 1433 Madison St., Oakland.

YOGA & BODYWORK

Partner Yoga and Thai Massage Workshop Led by Domenick Wegman. Sat., Feb. 20, 1 p.m. $25. Namaste Yoga, 5416 College Avenue, Oakland, 510-547-8042, NamasteRockridge.com.

Yoga for Recovery from Addiction Free Hatha Flow class for people in 12-step recovery, for anyone who is recovering from addiction, or feels maybe they should be. All welcome. Wednesdays, 5:30-6 p.m. Free. Square One Yoga Collective, 4530 San Pablo Ave., Emeryville, squareoneyoga.com. ■

PICKS

Dances of Universal Peace

Dance has long been a key component of rituals around the world, since the dawn of humankind. Reconnect with those roots by joining a **Dances of Universal Peace session** at **Durant Center** (2330 Durant Ave., Berkeley) on Friday, Feb. 19. Held on the third Friday of every month, these sessions include easy-to-learn dances drawn from a wide range of traditions, accompanied by sing-along sacred phrases. 7:30 p.m., $5. PeaceWorksDanceNA.org. *— Anneli Rufus*

Mindful Drumming

Repetitive drumbeats have a way of soothing the spirit while bringing all who hear the sound into alignment. At the **Attitudinal Connection of Oakland** (3278 West St., Oakland) on Saturday, Feb. 20, a **Mindful Drumming meditation circle** facilitated by accomplished Ghanaian drummer Kokomon Clottey reveals techniques for transformation. Drums will be provided to participants. 3 p.m., free. AHC-Oakland.org. *— A.R.*

Partner Yoga Workshop

The road to health and harmony is wide enough for two. At **Namaste Yoga** (5416 College Ave., Oakland) on Saturday, Feb. 20, Domenick Wegman — who received yoga training in Thailand — leads a workshop **in partner yoga and Thai massage**, featuring postures that enhance trust and interdependence, along with nurturing massage that employs stretching and rhythmic pressure. 1 p.m., $25. NamasteRockridge.com *— A.R.*

Karate Studio Grand Opening

Gichin Funakoshi

Popularized by Okinawa-born father and son Gichin and Gigo Funakoshi, Shotokan-style Karate emphasizes strength, confidence, humility, and the ability to deflect attacks while avoiding unnecessary violence. A **grand-opening party** at **Shotokan Karate** (37428 Centralmont Pl., Fremont) on Sunday, Feb. 21, features demonstrations and tours of the 3,000-square-foot training area. 1 p.m., free. PineWaveKarateAcademy.com *— A.R.*

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PLANETS' HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

For the week of February 17-23, 2010

The planets proclaim another week of positive potential. And because it's been such a long time since back-to-back optimistic alignments trumped challenging ones, I can hardly believe my eyes. Sure, there are still some grumpy moments and a fractious rub here and there — but overall, this week, just like last week, the stars support happy attitudes, compassionate methods, and lots and lots of laughter.

The source of this potential for optimism is the ongoing Venus/Jupiter conjunction in Pisces, the sign of empathy and compassion. Venus is the personification of true value, especially as those ideals are expressed through art. Jupiter represents the extensive expanse of knowledge, belief systems, and social sensibilities, especially as those collective sensitivities relate to morality and justice. Venus is exalted in Pisces; Jupiter is its ancient coruler. The entire bundle is a potent signature for harmonious interactions based on a genuine and generous concern for the well-being of others. So don't be surprised if you feel motivated to make a meaningful difference in your world.

This conjunction is about love in all its many manifestations, not just romantic inclinations. I am not suggesting romance should take a backseat during the second week of this conjunction. But on February 18, as the Sun moves into Pisces, its bright light is going to amplify a variety of possible manifestations. So while you may think this is only about amorous desire, be prepared for other possibilities, especially the inspiration to transform altruistic aspirations into actual accomplishments.

Try not to let the current political situation overrun your Piscean vision of what's possible. While most of our politicians increasingly resemble the Borg, resistance in their constant barrage of misinformation is not futile. Resistance is essential, especially in the face of endless sound bytes that are geared to incite and inflame. Frankly, I'm convinced that those alien invader machines and their continuous effort to promote ignorance is really a dastardly plot to enslave us through stupidity. Be smarter. Turn off your television. Write your own stories. Sing your own songs. Listen to your own heart. This Sun/Jupiter/Venus conjunction in Pisces won't happen again for a very long time, which means it would be wise to make the most of it while you can.

As the week unfolds you may also feel the quiet tug of Mars Retrograde. It goes Direct on March 10, which means by the end of this week it will start to slow down in preparation for its turn-around. That deceleration has the potential for great frustration. Mars has been retrograde since December 20, and now as that journey starts to wind down, some of us are sure to get wound up. Do your best to stay calm and focused. And when possible, use humor to relieve the tension. Laughter is still the best medicine.

If you know your *Ascendant* and/or your Moon sign, read that, too.

ARIES You seldom think of true power knowing its limits, but truly powerful people are comfortable within their limitations because they compensate by delegating. Be willing to assign certain tasks to the right people and you will reap tangible rewards.

TAURUS You may think your situation requires political negotiation, but if you are clear, precise, and direct about your intentions and goals, you'll bypass intrigue and go directly to success. Be true to yourself and you'll stay true to your vision.

GEMINI A gentle touch will work wonders in your professional life, so rather than push too hard, lighten up. Rely on your innate talent for freethinking, then apply that expansive perspective to situations in need of a healing hand.

CANCER A desire for love — all types of love — inspires a new attitude that is hungry for adventure, inside and out. Give yourself permission to explore a variety of relationships and you'll access a deeper appreciation for the power of love.

LEO Don't hesitate to immerse yourself 100 percent in whatever brings you joy. It is your destiny to leap into life with unbridled passion, and while your enthusiasm doesn't always deliver, it's still a wondrous fire to behold.

VIRGO It won't be easy maintaining a balance in your relationships — your feelings are too intense to hold back or edit. So instead of trying to be cool, give yourself permission to simply be in the moment and enjoy the process.

LIBRA The ground is shifting, but you have the ability to roll with the motion. Rather than resist, allow these changes to unfold. Once you have a better understanding of the situation you can make the necessary adjustments.

SCORPIO As John Lennon once sang, *There's nothing you can do that can't be done.* And never were words more true. Use this time wisely and you won't be disappointed with the results.

SAGITTARIUS Forces beyond your control are stirring the deepest part of your psychic pond, so rather than waste time and energy trying to be in charge, let go. Release the need for a specific outcome and you'll have a lot more fun.

CAPRICORN Allow thoughtful conversation with family, friends and coworkers to stimulate a reflective process and you'll find yourself engaged in a beneficial dialogue that is both internal and external.

AQUARIUS Opportunities for financial gain continue, but the true benefits of this phase are to be found in the potential for greater self-esteem. Remember, true value can never be accurately measured by material means.

PISCES Surrender to the joy and let yourself feel it truly, madly, deeply. Opportunities to experience this kind of expansive creative signatures don't happen all that often. Don't resist; relish the intensity.

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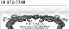
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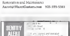
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FOOD & DRINK

The poached egg amuse-bouche

Chris Duffey

COMMIS' SIMPLY EXQUISITE CUISINE

Chef's impressive pedigree pays off at new Oakland restaurant.

By Matthew Stafford

When James Syhabout opened Commis last July, he brought a unique culinary voice to Oakland's burgeoning restaurant scene. The 29-year-old chef — whose credentials already ranged from Ferran Adrià's El Bulli (routinely described as the world's greatest restaurant) to Los Gatos' Manresa (one of the few restaurants in Northern California with two Michelin stars), had developed a unique and accomplished approach to flavor and texture. At Commis he'd be able to showcase his cutting-edge creations. Now the restaurant has earned a Michelin star all its own, and Syhabout's three-course prix fixe dinners, crafted from locally grown, harvested and foraged organic ingredients, are on every local foodie's must-try list.

The thirty-seat restaurant is located on Piedmont Avenue in a sparse, simple setting of white walls, blond-wood tables, and black leather chairs. Six counter seats are available to diners who want to watch Syhabout and his team in their small, open kitchen as they assemble pickled shallots, green lemons, black garlic, caramelized album nectar parsnip milk, crawfish butter, wild anise, and beeswax ice cream into striking mosaics on big, bone-white platters. Such dazzling creations tend to outshine their perfunctory surroundings (a bit of ambient luxe wouldn't be out of place here, especially at these prices), but the house cuisine — bursting with rich, bright flavors in largely unprecedented contrasts and combinations — is a rewarding adventure.

The meal begins with a basket of pillowy house-baked rolls, a crock of hand-churned sweet butter, and tall flutes of warm, frothy, herb-infused broth designed to cleanse and invigorate the palate. Our seltzer du jour was touched with chamomile, ginger, and strawberry purée, its bright, floral flavors paved the way for Commis' signature amuse-bouche: a poached egg. What sets Commis' poached egg apart from all others is the key to what makes the restaurant unique. First of all, the egg itself had a uncommonly creamy, custard-like consistency. It was served in a ramekin on a bed of puréed dates that mingled with the silky egg white and added a touch of sweetness and heft. Sprinkled on top were crescents of minced spring onion and toasted steel-cut oats, adding pizzazz and crunch to this perfectly balanced, culinarily startling yet delectable dish.

The first course options were equally inventive. The soup of the day starred broccoli romanesco, a rarely encountered vegetable that tastes like a nutty, mildly pungent variety of cauliflower. Here it was puréed into a light, creamy broth enhanced with bits of smoky speck and yellowfoot chanterelles foraged from the Oakland hills. At the table the hot soup was poured into a big white bowl strewn with fried leaves and florets from the titular veggie, a nice piece of culinary showbiz. Another less successful starter featured two velvety veal sweetbreads, perfectly crisp on the outside and creamy on the inside. Their unconventional platemate was a bed of hot rye-berry cereal, a creamy kasha-like preparation with a mild sweetness that complemented the honeyed richness of the sweetbreads. But the dish was topped off with half a dozen equally sweet and creamy braised garlic cloves when it could've used a bit of smoke, pepper, or snark.

Some say a restaurant is only as good as its simplest fish dish, and in that respect Commis delivers. The grilled Fort Bragg lingcod was not only perfectly moist and tender, but it retained the fish's fresh, delicate, almost ethereal flavor. Bright little rounds of daikon radish, an earthy fennel vinaigrette, a lusty white-bean purée, and (best of all) a smoky, salt-sprayed bacon-and-seaweed-infused broth jazzed up the fish without overpowering it.

Our favorite dish on the menu was the Muscovy duck prepared two ways. Slender slices of roasted breast meat were fanned against a stack of corned and pulled leg and thigh meat that was as dark and richly flavored as the breast was pink and tender. Peppery braised greens, pungent pearled parsnips, and sweet, supple dried black cherries added piquant contrasts to the savory, succulent meat.

Pastry chef Carlos Salgado offers three dessert options each night. (One of them is usually an elaborate cheese course involving things like black pepper pastry puffs and lavender rains.) Our goat's milk panna cotta was an ivory-colored dream in cream and sugar, absolutely light and silky with a mildly tart afterbite. The suave texture was accented with crunchy little candied pistachios and the barely sweet flavor with a quenelle of brisk, earthy beet blood orange sorbet. The chocolate "tile," a small brick of Valrhona's bittersweet, high-octane Caraibe in fork-tender fondant form, was astonishingly mood-enhancing, particularly with its lily-gilding sprinkle of crunchy cocoa nibs and scoop of burnt vanilla ice cream. A cube of sweet, palate-cleansing (if not particularly fruity) fruit gelée arrived with our check.

Although most of the pre-dessert dishes on Commis' menu tend to feature fish, fowl, or meat, the kitchen will create a special flesh-free meal for vegetarian diners. Just let them know your preferences when you make your reservation. Food allergies and other dietary restrictions can be accommodated as well.

A 33-bottle wine list is available for those who don't want to invest in the prix fixe's wine-pairing option. Many of the selections come from boutique vineyards in France, Spain, Germany, and our own back yard, and were chosen to complement Syhabout's intricate flavors. Most are in the $30-$50 price range (the eight by-the-glass options are on the steep side, however). The star of the even briefer fourteen-beer list is London Porter, a rich, earthy, chestnut-brown brew that accented the sweetness of the sweetbreads beautifully. Teetotalers can enjoy a nonalcoholic Vignette Wine Country Soda in chardonnay or pinot noir, or something from the restaurant's unusual tea list: a Yunnan gold tea with fermented leaf tips, perhaps, or a caffeine-free Ba Bao Cha infused with goji berries, red dates, and ginseng root.

Finally, it bears noting that while Commis' delicacies are exquisite, they're also conservatively apportioned. Plan accordingly. ●

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Kirala 2100 Ward St., Berkeley, 510-549-3486. (Japanese/Sushi) $$

Breads of India Cuisine 2448 Sacramento

BERKELEY-WEST & EMERYVILLE

Bette's Oceanview Diner 1807 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-644-3230. (American/Diner/Organic/Sustainable) $$

Gourmet Ghetto Breakfast 1721 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-0560. (American) $

Bucci's 6121 Hollis St., Emeryville, 510-547-4725. (California Cuisine/Italian/Organic/Sustainable) $$$

Fellini 1727 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-5900. (Japanese/Sushi) $$

Fellini 1401 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-5050. (Bakery/Vegetarian/Vegan) $$

Mama Ruths' Cafe 2654 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-704-4080. (Caribbean) $

Pakistani 1196 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-3305. (Indian/Pakistani/Vegetarian) $

Lanesplitter Pizza and Pub 2083 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-1652. (Pizza/All Cuisines) $

Manzanita 050 40th St., Emeryville, 510-985-8386. (Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Sea Breeze Market and Deli 598 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-486-8802. (Deli/Seafood) $

Sea Salt 2512 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-883-1720. (California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable/Seafood) $$-$$$

Spenger's Fresh Fish Grotto 1919 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-845-7771. (Seafood) $$$

Southerns 1788 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-525-5100. (Mexican/Organic/Sustainable/Tapas/Small Plates) $-$$

CONCORD, MARTINEZ & PLEASANT HILL

Chola's 4316 Clayton Rd., Concord, 925-686-0710. (Peruvian/South Gourmet) $-$$

El Barzola 2263 Morello Ave., Pleasant Hill, 925-671-0520. (Pizza) $$

Paulo's Gyros and Hot Dogs 248 Golf Club Rd., Pleasant Hill, 925-687-4454. (Greek/Italian) $

Kinder's Custom Meats 2221 Morello Ave., Pleasant Hill, 925-798-3033. (Barbecue, Deli) $

Kinder's Custom Meats 1820 Arnold Industrial Way, Concord, 925-825-8162. (Barbecue, Deli) $

L&L Hawaiian Barbecue 800 Crescent Dr., Pleasant Hill, (925) 681-3454. (Barbecue/Hawaiian) $

La Pinata 2351 Pinata Pass Rd., Concord, 925-686-5515. (Mexican) $$

Loft Diner Brasserie 136 Crescent Dr., Pleasant Hill, 925-288-1222. (French/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

Luna Ristorante 2110 Willow Pass Rd., Suite B, Concord, 925-691-4080. (Italian) $$-$$$

Monte's Brasserie 2115 Mount Diablo St., Concord, 925-691-6200. (Mexican/Organic/Sustainable) $$

EL CERRITO, RICHMOND & NORTH

Evelyn Hot Pot City 3248 Pierce St., Richmond, 510-524-8181. (Chinese) $-$$

Hong Kong Seafood Restaurant 3288A Pierce St., Richmond, 510-527-3888. (Chinese/Seafood) $-$$$

The Pizzeria 335 El Cerrito Plaza, El Cerrito, 510-526-4321. (Deli/German/Austrian/Cafe/Coffeehouse) $

Kabana-Ya Pizzeria 10644-10648 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, 510-620-1678. (Japanese/Sushi) $-$$

Kinder's Custom Meats 2600 San Pablo Ave., San Pablo, 510-724-3330. (Barbecue, Deli) $

Sukhumvit Thai 3288 Pierce St., #D1 1L

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RECENTLY REVIEWED

Everest Cafe
1645 Solano Ave., Berkeley, CA, 510-526-4915. The bright, invigorating flavors of Nepal star at this friendly little Solano Avenue hideaway. In addition to delights like *momo* (steamed dumplings), *thukpa* (noodle soup), and *bhindi ko tarkari* (stewed okra and onion), there are several tantalizing Indian preparations on the menu: the samosa chaat, potato naan, and tender smoky tandoori chicken are especially worthwhile. The desserts are available, but the mango lassi is as sweet and creamy as a milkshake. Good selection of Tibetan beers. $$

Flavah Island Café
2057 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-704-4081. Kingston native Don Edwards cooks authentic Jamaican favorites such as salt-cod fritters, oxtail, curried goat, sautéed salted cod, steamed fish, and sassy yellow ackee. The latter, Jamaica's national fruit, is related to the lychee but looks, feels, and tastes for all the world like scrambled eggs. Edwards makes most of these dishes based on his aunt's and grandmother's recipes. Experiments such as Rasta Pasta — a meatless standout featuring whole-wheat fettuccini in a thick, basil-scented soy-cream sauce, worthy of any fancy restaurant in town — are his own inventions, as is his allspice-rich jerk marinade. Some dishes are classic-era soul fusion: JamAsian Stir Fry is a mountain of chewy and irresistibly smoky [illegible] noodles. This and everything else here, including full $2.95 breakfasts featuring enormous berry-topped pancakes, comes in such generous portions at such bargain-basement prices that you almost wish you could pay more, just to be fair. $

Nature's Express
1823 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-527-5332. From sturdy black-bean and "cheese" burritos to velvety peanut-butter "milk" shakes to slender, tender air-baked golden "fries" to two different varieties of "burger," everything served at this pint-size vegan fast-food joint is not only meatless, but milkless, eggless, honeyless, and preservative-free. For a menu whose sixty-something choices span breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks, agave-sweetened desserts, and snacks, that's saying a lot. Sandwiches, wraps, salads, breakfast burritos, and other items made here with all-organic produce and no preservatives or chemical additives bring bright, pure flavors to the fast-food scene. Especially creative touches are turnip slaw, a tempeh Reuben sandwich, and a fishless "Hold the Tuna" sandwich whose secret is chickpeas. $

Phat Matt's BBQ
3415 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-879-7284. Tender, juicy, supple flesh is the prime attraction at this unpretentious rib joint. Texas-style beef brisket, North Carolina pulled pork, and a sparkier chicken doused in house-made barbecue sauce are almost creamy in texture, while the brick-red hot links snap, crackle, and spice up your insides. The chewy tri-tip, however, is easily avoidable. Side dishes are mostly unimpressive (exception: the wonderfully tangy potato salad), but don't skip the praline-like pecan pie or the blissful, buttery peach cobbler. $$

Green Papaya
2046 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-[illegible]. Berkeley's first vegetarian Thai restaurant is owned by the same family that owns TukTuk and Your Place. Occupying the space that formerly housed Sushi A'float, it sports a fresh new design that reflects its allegiance to the plant realm. It's one of those rare places in which you keep on ordering and keep on liking everything you try. The fried-taro appetizer is a revelation: a creamy-starchy mallet-slab whose crisp, golden skin suggests a fried-chicken [illegible]-derma doughnut. Other star dishes include the dalkan mutton, pineapple-ginger curry, and peanut-sauce tofu. Noodle dishes are a bit sparse, but maybe that's because most of the other dishes — especially the curries, which range from mild to three-star spicy — are so gigantic. $

I Squared
5401 College Ave., Oakland, 510-658-4400. Spare, sleek Rockridge storefront serves a brief menu of salads, kabobs, pastas, and other signature dishes out of the Iranian and Italian playbooks, all of them fresh, satisfying, and absolutely tasty. A few more Persian specialties would be welcome, but the delectable lamb and cinnamon cabbage wraps will do in a pinch. Get the Amaretto parfait for dessert. Impressive beer list. $$

Barbecue 510-558-8131 (Barbecue/Asian/Thai/Seafood) $
Shinsen 1581 Sycamore Ave., Unit B, Hercules, 510-245-5500 (Japanese/Sushi) $$
El Torogoz 14021 San Pablo Ave., San Pablo, 510-215-7503 (Central American/Salvadoran) $
Pho Thai 844 Willow Ave., Hercules, 510-799-8808 (Southeast Asian/Thai/Burmese) $$

FREMONT NEWARK & UNION CITY

Cafe [illegible] 46651 Warm Springs Blvd., Fremont, 510-668-0003 (Chinese) $$-$$$
Havana Cafe 3954 Mowry Ave., Fremont, 510-790-3466 (Cuban/Pakistani/Tapas/Small Plates) $-$$
HanaYofu 1363 Decoto Rd., Union City, 510-675-9455 (Chinese) $
De Afghanan Kabob House 37405 Fremont Blvd., Fremont, 510-745-9599 (Afghan/Halal Eatery) $-$$
Kinder's Custom Meats 43701 Boscell Rd., Fremont, 510-440-1507 (Delis/Barbecue/Deli) $
L&L Hawaiian Barbecue 3588 Decoto Rd., Union City, (510) 324-8538 (Barbecue/Hawaiian) $
Massimo's 5200 Mowry Ave., Fremont, 510-792-2000 (California Bistro/Italian) $$$
Mel's Mein and Pot Restaurant 6000 Mowry Ave., Newark, 510-792-2898 (Chinese) $$

HAYWARD & SAN LEANDRO

Buffalo Bill's Brewery 1082 B St., Hayward, 510-886-9823 (American/Brewpub) $
Barbacoa 1296 MacArthur Blvd., San Leandro, 510-895-8008 (Asian Fusion/Tapas/Small Plates) $$
Cosy Corner 26437 Mission Blvd., Hayward, 510-581-4983 (Seafood/Mexican) $
JJ's Restaurant and Pies 2887 Castro Valley Blvd., Castro Valley, 510-886-6820 (Diner) $
L&L Hawaiian Barbecue 27303 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, 510-783-0880 (Barbecue/Hawaiian) $
La Hacienda 2998 Mission St., San Leandro, 510-357-8901 (Mexican) $$
La Hacienda 504 Rose St., Hayward, 510-538-8951 (Mexican) $$
Manila Garden 22000-B Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, 510-670-0727 (Filipino/Southeast Asian) $-$$
Pignon Bonnie Restaurant 1287 Davis St., San Leandro, 510-568-4795 (Italian) $$-$$$
Sam's Super Burger 1841 Hesperian Blvd., San Lorenzo, 510-278-6338 (American/Diner) $
Kyoto Sushi 1407 E. 14th St., San Leandro, 510-352-2748 (Japanese/Sushi) $-$$
Yu's Restaurant 272 Parrott St., San Leandro, 510-357-8888 (Vietnamese) $$

LAMORINDA

Nenas Cafe [illegible] Sq., Suite 105, Orinda, 925-254-5390 (Greek/Turkish/House Eatery) $
Bo's Barbecue 3422 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 925-283-7133 (Barbecue/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$
Chow Lafayette 53 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette, 925-962-2469 (American/California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable) $$
La Finestra Ristorante 100 Lafayette Circle, Suite 101, Lafayette, 925-284-5291 (Italian) $$-$$$
Lily's House 3561 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 925-284-7800 (Chinese) $$-$$$
Hanna Lafayette 3528 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 925-284-4422 (Asian Fusion/California Cuisine) $$$
Postino 3565 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 925-299-8700 (California Cuisine/Italian/Organic/Sustainable) $$$
Rabbit House Cafe 1632 [illegible] St., Moraga, 925-376-5127 (American) $-$$

Tapas/Small Plates) $$$

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Pretty and Rich

The Berkeley Wine Festival may disappoint wineaux, but Winestock! has plenty to offer

When I first heard about the Berkeley Wine Festival, which kicks off at the Claremont Hotel on March 12, I thought it presented the perfect opportunity to write my annual "splurge locally" column featuring wines made in the East Bay. But, sadly for both locavores and Wineaux, the Berkeley Wine Festival doesn't seem to be intended for either. Among the eight wineries featured at a series of dinners and receptions taking place through May, not one hails from anywhere closer than Napa, and the price of admission to the least expensive event is $85.

That's not to say that the dinners, which will feature Napa and Sonoma notables such as Duckhorn and Cakebread, won't make for gastronomically delightful evenings. But if the prospect leaves you pining for a more authentically local and budget-friendly wine event, consider Winestock!, which takes place Saturday, February 27, at JC Cellars Winery in Oakland (55 4th Street, JCCellars.com). The $25 entry fee may seem a bit steep, but that's about the price of JC Cellars' least expensive wine (with its most expensive, the 2007 Fourques Pas Syrah, usually fetching $135 a bottle). So with a dozen current and pre-release wines flowing freely, you should get more than your money's worth. Add to that a few Grateful Dead covers courtesy of the Dave Stein Bubbah, hippie-themed appetizers, and a mandate to wear bellbottoms, and you've almost got a festival! If you stop in, make sure to try the winery's **2007 Sweetwater Springs Russian River Valley Zinfandel ($35)** — a chewy, rustic Zin with strong notes of leather. Definitely groovy.

Speaking of local heroes, in our Token Winemaker's old stomping grounds of the Santa Clara Valley, that's exactly how a lot of folks would describe the Guglielmo brothers and their eponymous winery. Old-timers who have long been respected by other wine growers in the region, the Guglielmos are also noteworthy for their efforts at producing wine from the little-known Grignolino grape. So when we decided to taste Chardonnays this week, Token Winemaker was especially eager to try the **2008 Tre Chardonnay ($9.95)**, one of four varietals sold under Guglielmo's new Tre Cellars label. No playing favorites allowed, so we tasted it blind against the **2008 Kendall-Jackson Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay ($15)** — and still preferred it, although both wines were respectable.

Of the two, the Tre had a more powerful aroma — collectively we sniffed floral perfume, toast, lemon, pear, melon, and banana, with Token Winemaker declaring the bouquet "pretty and rich." The wine was pleasing on the palate, with notes of honey, straw, and vanilla. The Kendall-Jackson offered a somewhat similar but lighter and more muted aroma of toast and butterscotch, which was echoed in its taste. Respectable, yes, but you can find better Chards (like the Tre) for under $10.

— *Blair Campbell*

For retail availability, visit EastBayExpress.com.

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OAKLAND-DOWNTOWN & JACK LONDON SQ

Battambang Restaurant 850 Broadway, Oakland, 510-839-8815 (Cambodian/Laotian/Seafood/Southeast Asian/Vietnamese/Vegan) $-$$
Binh Minh Quan 338 12th St., Oakland, 510-893-8136 (Southeast Asian/Vietnamese) $-$$$
La Borinqueña Mexicatessen 582 Seventh St., Oakland, 510-444-9954 (Mexican) $-$$
Breads of India 948 Clay St., Oakland, 510-834-7684 (Indian/Pakistani) $-$$
[illegible] 1111 Broadway, Lobby Level of AP, Building, Oakland, 510-465-5300 (California Cuisine/[illegible]) $$-$$$
Chef Edwards' Bar-B-Que 1998 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, 510-834-9516 (Barbecue/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$
Le Cheval 1007 Clay St., Oakland, 510-763-8495 (Southeast Asian/Vietnamese) $$-$$$
[illegible] Cafe 337 Eighth St., Oakland, 510-839-0223 (Chinese) $
Flora 1900 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-286-0100 (California Cuisine) $$-$$$
[illegible] 412 13th St., Oakland, 510-832-[illegible] (Japanese/Sushi) $-$$$
Miss Pearl's Jam House One Broadway, Oakland, 510-444-7171 (Caribbean) $$$
[illegible] [illegible] St., Oakland, 510-625-[illegible] (Southern/Soul Food) $$
Spices 3 369 12th St., Oakland, 510-625-8889 (Chinese) $$

OAKLAND-EAST

Champa Garden 2102 8th Ave., Oakland, 510-238-8819 (Cambodian/Laotian/Southeast Asian/Thai/Vietnamese) $
El [illegible] 4086 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-261-0006 (Mexican) $-$$
Full House Cafe 3719 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, 510-4[illegible] (American/Diner) $
Huong Que Cafe 1238 7th Ave., Oakland, 510-835-8488 (Southeast Asian/Vietnamese) $
[illegible] de Mayo 3340 #2 E. 12th St., Oakland, 510-533-0260 (Dessert/Ice Cream) $
[illegible] 2220 Livingston St., Oakland, 877-688-4830 (Breakfast/Brunch) $
Tacos Sinaloa Corner of International Blvd. and High St., Oakland, no phone (Mexican) $
Taqueria San José 3433 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-533-5748 (Mexican) $
Tiki Tom's 350 29th Ave., Oakland, 510-532-8207 (Hawaiian) $$

OAKLAND-PIEDMONT, GRAND LAKE & EAST

Andy and Cindy's Thai Cuisine Saturday Grand Lake Farmers' Market, Oakland (415) 813-4100 (Organic/Sustainable/Thai/Burmese/Vegetarian/Vegan) $
Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers 4162 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-655-7180 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $
Bay Wolf Cafe and Restaurant 3853 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-655-6004 (California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable) $$$
Blackberry Bistro 4240 Park Blvd., Oakland, 510-336-1088 (Breakfast/Brunch/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$
Camino 3917 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-547-5035 (California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable) $$$
César Piedmont 4039 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-883-0222 (Spanish/Tapas/Small Plates) $$
[illegible] 4903 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-547-8444 (French) $-$$
Holy Land 677 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-272-0535 (Kosher/Halal/Middle Eastern) $
La Taza de Cafe 3909 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-658-2373 (Spanish) $$
[illegible] 278 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-597-1222 (Italian/Pizza) $$
Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant 4123 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-420-1122 (African/Ethiopian/Eritrean) $
Spettro 3355 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland, 510-451-7738 (California Cuisine/Pizza) $$
Tropix 3814 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-653-2444 (Caribbean) $$

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OAKLAND-ROCKRIDGE

À Côté 5478 College Ave., Oakland, 510-655-6469 (California Cuisine/French/Italian/Organic/Sustainable/Spanish/Tapas/Small Plates) $$$
Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers 5819 College Ave., Oakland, 510-601-0444 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $
Cactus Taqueria 5642 College Ave., Oakland, 510-658-6180 (Mexican/Organic/Sustainable) $
[illegible] 5484 College Ave., Oakland, 510-653-54[illegible] (Breakfast/Brunch/California Cuisine/French) $$-$$$
Breads of India 5211 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-658-3488 (Indian/Pakistani) $$

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Olivetto 5655 College Ave., Oakland, 510-547-5356 (Italian/Organic/Sustainable) $$-$$$

OAKLAND-TEMESCAL

Addis Ethiopian Restaurant 6100 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-653-3456 (African/Ethiopian/Eritrean) $$

Andy and Cindy's Thai Market Sunday Temescal Farmers' Market, Oakland, (415) 412-6830 (Organic/Sustainable/Thai/Vietnamese/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Aunt Mary's Cafe 4307 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-601-9227 (American/Breakfast/Brunch/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$

Doña Tomás 5004 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-450-0522 (Mexican) $$$

Genova Delicatessen and Ravioli 5095 Telegraph Ave. Building 4, Oakland, 510-652-7401 (Deli/Italian) $

Lanesplitter Pizza and Pub 4799 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-653-5350 (Pizza/All California) $

The Mixing Bowl 4920 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-655-5650 (California Cuisine) $$

Ohgane Korean Restaurant 3915 Broadway, Oakland, 510-594-8300 (Korean) $$-$$$

[illegible] Chicken Town 5101 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-595-5308 (Mexican) $$

[illegible] Barbecue House 3801 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-654-5757 (Korean) $-$$

TRI-VALLEY

[illegible] House & Beer 11902 Main St., Sunol, 925-862-0821 (American/Steak House) $$-$$$

Hap's Original 122 W. Neal St., Pleasanton, 925-600-9200 (American/Steak House) $$$$

Hinder's Custom Meats 4385 Hopyard Rd., Suite F2, Pleasanton, 925-461-2333 (Barbecue/Deli) $

Hinder's Custom Meats 580 Town & Country Dr., Suite G, Danville 925-552-0020 (Barbecue/Deli) $

Lawrence's Walnut Creek Meat Co. 225-B Alamo Plaza, Alamo 925-838-0585 (Barbecue/Deli) $

Patrick David's Restaurant 416 Sycamore Valley Rd. W, Danville 925-838-7611 (Asian Fusion/California Cuisine) $$$$

Red Smoke Grill 4501 Hopyard Rd., Pleasanton 925-734-0307 (American/Barbecue) $

Roderick's Grill and Freezer 5801 Owens Dr., Pleasanton, 925-251-0630 (Barbecue/Seafood/Southern/Soul Food) $$

WALNUT CREEK

Babushka Russian Deli & Restaurant 1475 Newell Ave., Walnut Creek, 925-210-0779 Eastern European $$

Bing Crosby's 1342 Broadway Plaza, Walnut Creek, 925-939-2464 (American/Steak House) $$$$

Le Mistral 1506 N. Main St., Walnut Creek, 925-407-8000 (French/Organic/Sustainable) $$$

Masters of India 1358 N. Main St., Walnut Creek, 925-256-2668 (Indian/Pakistani/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

Dragon 2000 1078 Market Pl., Walnut Creek, 925-292-8188 (Chinese) $-$$

Ephesus Kabob Market 1721 Locust St., Walnut Creek, 925-945-6080 (Greek/Turkish/Organic/Sustainable) $$$

Marzel 1869 Bonanza St., Walnut Creek, 925-935-4556 (California Cuisine/Cajun/Nouveau Cuisine) $$

Hinder's Custom Meats 1930 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek, 925-932-9393 (Barbecue/Deli) $

Lark Creek Market Grill 1360 Locust St., Walnut Creek, 925-256-1234 (American/California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable) $$-$$$

Vic Stewart's 850 South Broadway, Walnut Creek, 925-943-5666 (Steak House) $$$-$$$$

FOOD & WINE

CULINARY & WINE

Block Cocktail Sessions Mixologist Suzanne Long creates cocktails on the spot, using [illegible] syrups, liqueurs, and [illegible] specialty spirits. Wednesdays, 5 p.m. [illegible] through June 1. Forbidden Island, 1304 Lincoln Ave., Alameda, 510-749-0332, ForbiddenIslandAlameda.com.

Charles Chocolates Factory Tour Opportunity to watch chocolatiers in production, followed by a Q&A. Wednesdays, Saturdays, 11:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m., free. Charles Chocolates Factory Store and Chocolate Bar, 6529 Hollis St., Emeryville, 510-652-4412. CharlesChocolates.com.

East Bay Green Drinks Monthly gathering for people interested in sustainability. Topics include green business, architecture, design, organics, and clean energy. Third Wednesday of every month, 5:30-8 p.m. [illegible] through Dec. 31. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 2221 Broadway, Oakland, 510-451-4677. LukasOakland.com.

Fat Tuesday Party Special menu [illegible] crab hush puppies, oyster po' boys, sausage and shrimp [illegible], and [illegible] accompanied by a Fat Tuesday Hurricane. Through Feb. 17, 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Spenger's Fresh Fish Grotto, 1919 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-845-7771, Spengers.com.

Food Market Foods With cookbook author Bryant Terry and a dance performance by [illegible]. Sun., Feb. 21, 7 p.m. $15. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-2568, LaPena.org.

Tea and Film Screening Screening of *Like Water for Chocolate* with chocolate bread and dipping sauce. Sat., Feb. 20, 6 p.m. $29.95. Golden Tea Garden, 20030 Main St., Hayward.

FARMERS' MARKETS

Alameda Farmers' Market With locally grown fruits and vegetables, plus family activities. For info visit PCFMA.com. Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m. free. Webster St. (at Haight Ave.), Webster St., Alameda.

Bayfair Center Farmers' Market Fresh produce supplied by local organic and specialty farmers. Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. Bayfair Center, 15555 E. 14th St., San Leandro, 510-357-6000, ShopBayfair.com.

Concord Farmers' Market Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. free. Todos Santos Plaza, Willow Pass Rd. and Grant St., Concord, 925-[illegible]-3464.

Danville Certified Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. [illegible] St. at Prospect St., Danville.

Farm Fresh Choice Community Garden Farm Fresh Choice runs [illegible] stands in culturally diverse, limited-resource neighborhoods. Wednesdays, 3-6:30 p.m. 510-548-1704. EcologyCenter.org. Frances Albrier Community Center, San Pablo Park, 2800 Park St., Berkeley 510-981-6150. Ci.berkeley.ca.us/recreation/[illegible]

Irvington Farmers' Market Sundays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. Bay St. at Fremont Blvd., Fremont.

Kaiser Permanente Fremont Farmers' Market Thursdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. free. Kaiser Fremont, 39400 Paseo Padre Pkwy., Fremont.

Kaiser Permanente Hayward Farmers' Market With vendors selling locally-grown California produce at the main entrance to the hospital. Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. free. Kaiser Hayward, 27400 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward.

Kaiser Permanente Martinez Farmers' Market Thursdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. free. Kaiser Permanente Martinez Medical Offices, 200 Muir Rd., Martinez.

Kaiser Permanente Oakland Farmers' Market With vendors selling fresh organic fruits and vegetables. Fridays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. free. Kaiser Oakland, 3801 Howe St., Oakland.

Kaiser Permanente Union City Farmers' Market Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., free. Kaiser Medical Center, Union City, 3553 Whipple Rd., Union City.

Kaiser Permanente Walnut Creek Farmers' Market Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., free. Kaiser Walnut Creek, 1425 South Main St., Walnut Creek.

Kensington Farmers' Market With a rush of fresh flowers, all organic chocolates, bee products, fresh wild fish, fruits and vegetables, nuts, butters, bread, cheese, fresh pasta, and seasonal [illegible]. Sundays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. free. [illegible] at the Colusa Circle, Kensington.

[illegible] Market Garden Market Sponsored and maintained by Oakland Food Connection, a nonprofit that strives to expand nutritional awareness, access to healthy foods and the connections between people and our planet. The market features organic produce from [illegible] Organic Farm based out of Salinas, CA and a youth-led prepared food outlet called the [illegible] Lawn Cafe. For more info or to find out how to become [illegible] please contact Tan at [illegible] or call 510-[illegible]. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. [illegible] Farmers Market 4173 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland.

[illegible] Farmers' Market Breads, specialty foods, all-organic [illegible] and more for sale, plus special programs and events. Thursdays, 3-7 p.m. free admission. 510-548-3333. EcologyCenter.org. Shattuck Ave. at Rose St., Berkeley.

Pinole Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. Fernandez Ave. at Pear St., Pinole.

Pleasanton Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. Pleasanton Farmers' Market, West Angela St., Pleasanton.

Saturday Berkeley Farmers' Market Fresh and organic produce, breads, specialty foods, and more for sale, plus special programs and events. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. free. 510-548-3333, EcologyCenter.org. MLK Civic Center Park, 2151 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley, 510-[illegible]

Temescal Farmers' Market California certified farmers offer seasonal produce, dried fruits and nuts, fresh ranch eggs, baked goods, locally caught fish, fresh-cut flowers, and more. Info: 510-745-7100. Sundays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. DMV Parking Lot, 5300 Claremont Ave., Oakland.

Tuesday Berkeley Farmers' Market Fresh and organic produce, breads, specialty foods, and more for sale, plus special programs and events. Tuesdays, 2-7 p.m. free. 510-548-3333, EcologyCenter.org. Derby St. (at Martin Luther King Jr. Way), Berkeley.

Union City Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. free. Old Alvarado Park, Smith & [illegible] St., Union City.

PICK

Tea, Movie and a Meal

Watch *Like Water for Chocolate* while eating chocolate bread with chocolate dipping sauce at the Golden Tea Garden (22630 Main St., Hayward) on Saturday, Feb. 20. The tea-and-screening's repast also includes chicken-mushroom pot pie, steak crisps, quiche Lorraine, spanakopita, pecan bars, mango sorbet, petits fours, chocolate-dipped strawberries, cheesecake and more — accompanied by pots of tea. 6 p.m. $29.95, reservations required. GoldenTeaGarden.com — *Anneli Rufus*

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MOUNTAIN HIGH

North Face overcomes its pedigree with climbing thrills. *The Most Dangerous Man in America* simply overcomes

By Kelly Vance

Toni (Benno Fürmann), Andi (Florian Lukas), and Erik (George Friedrich) survey the mountain in *North Face*

Why should the German mountain-climbing adventure *North Face* be such a guilty pleasure? Can't we take the story of a pair of intrepid alpinists trying to scale the notorious North Face of Switzerland's Eiger mountain at face value? What is there about filmmaker Philipp Stölzl's relatively straight-ahead outdoor drama that gives us the willies?

Maybe it's the Nazi thing. Everybody's favorite symbol of ultimate evil in the 20th century has really never taken a break from movie screens since 1945 — but it should. Granted, World War II was the biggest news story of the past century, but we've digested that, and it's time to move on. It's far too easy to use Hitler and the Nazis as all-purpose boogeymen in everything from documentaries to spy potboilers, and frankly the motif has been overworked.

North Face has such a heavy Nazi angle that it's tempting to view the presence of National Socialist mischief as the driving force behind the drama. The film begins in 1936, a few months before the notorious Berlin Olympics. The Nazi government is eager to prove the superiority of German athletes and has identified the "conquering" of the Eiger's most dangerous face as a national goal. A prize is offered for the first mountaineering team to scale the North Face, and the *Berliner Zeitung* newspaper is devoting major space to the international contest. To have a German team climb it would be a propaganda triumph for the Third Reich.

All this is a matter of intense interest to Luise Fellner (Johanna Wokalek), a shy young *Berliner Zeitung* reporter who happens to be a childhood friend of two of the leading contenders for the Eiger crown, Toni Kurz (Benno Fürmann) and Andreas Hinterstoisser (Florian Lukas). They all grew up together in Berchtesgaden. Toni and Andi, the epitome of ruddy-faced athletic Aryan manhood, are members of the Mountain Brigade and expert climbers, but they're not party members — every time they get "Heil Hitler'd" they come back with a wisecrack. Nevertheless, the hopes of the Führer ride with them. Even though they're not fervent Nazi warriors like the *Zeitung*'s overbearing editor Herr Arau (Ulrich Tukur), Toni and Andi look the part. We can't help picturing them a few years later torching villages in Russia.

North Face could make another kind of sense nearly as dubious: as an anachronistic example of the German "mountain film." Popularized in the Twenties and Thirties by producer-director Arnold Fanck with such on-location adventures as *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* (starring Leni Riefenstahl, who would go on to make *Triumph of the Will*), Fanck's heroic tales of bravery and endurance on snowy peaks struck a strange, ritualistic chord with Hitler and his gang.

That disproportionate enthusiasm for climbing and mountain scenery in general eventually took a drubbing by French intellectual Roland Barthes. In his 1957 book *Mythologies*, Barthes rebukes the "old Alpine myth" of the "picturesque" mountains and its associated "Helvetico-Protestant morality" and "cult of nature and of puritanism" as hopelessly corny and bourgeois.

So *North Face* has a few cultural and political peaks to scale even before Toni and Andi leave their base camp before dawn to begin the Eiger ascent in the moonlight. The good news is that once the two men start their cliffhanging on the treacherous vertical fields of rock and ice, all thoughts of Nazis, propaganda, and mothball health-regimen belief systems get left far behind in favor of some of the most thrilling mountain scenes ever put on film.

Toni and Andi didn't have the advantages of our present-day technology. Their equipment was basically wool, cotton, leather, wood, and iron. As a storm brews up and director Stölzl crosscuts between shots of men freezing on the mountain and hotel guests gathered around a cozy fire, we take a lesson in how to tie a knot when your fingers have turned black from frostbite. Forget Hitler, Fanck, and Barthes. *North Face* is the most exhilarating thriller of the season.

North Face

Directed by Philipp Stölzl
With Benno Fürmann, Florian Lukas, and Johanna Wokalek. Opens Friday

The Most Dangerous Man in America

Directed by Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith
Featuring Daniel Ellsberg. Opens Friday

After the February 3 *Express* preview piece on the making of Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith's *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*, there wouldn't seem to be much left to say on the subject. But any documentary important enough to be seen as "the secret history of the Vietnam war" probably warrants comments from more than one point of view, so here goes.

The Cold War/Vietnam era of US politics appears in the hindsight of Ehrlich and Goldsmith's film as simultaneously more brutal and more innocent than the present. American politicians and government officials were more nakedly arrogant and less self-consciously judicious in those days. The imperial mindset went largely unquestioned before Ellsberg, the Harvard-trained former Marine Corps officer and "war thinker" for the Rand Corporation and the Defense Department, began to have his doubts in the late 1960s. For Ellsberg, the beginning of the end came when he asked a fellow American in Vietnam: "Do you ever feel like the Redcoats?"

President Richard Nixon, in the role of King George III, comes in for a special roasting in the film via the now-public "secret tapes." His voice quivering, Nixon calls Vietnam "this shit-ass little country" and rails against *The New York Times* and the "son-of-a-bitchin' thief" Ellsberg for "stealing" the 7,000-page top secret documents that blew the lid off the war effort. Which was the bigger lie, the Gulf of Tonkin incident or Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction? Particularly disheartening is the revelation of the real reason we were in Vietnam: partly to keep that country from "going Communist," partly to thwart the Red Chinese, but mostly to save face. This means that more than two million Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans died to ensure Nixon's and Henry Kissinger's credibility.

Ellsberg is still justifiably outraged by the Vietnam war and subsequent events. Now 78 years old and still publicly skeptical of American "freedom operations," he admits he was disappointed when no one stepped forward and leaked information that would have stopped the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Perhaps times have indeed changed. But the cumulative moral power of *The Most Dangerous Man in America* is a bracing reminder of the days when a reporter would declare: "We can and will be independent from our government." ●

To share this story, go to: [illegible]

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MOVIES&THEATERS

To learn where a movie is playing, note the abbreviations at the end of each listing, then consult the theater guide at the bottom of this page. Capsule reviews are written by Andrea Grozoni (A.G.), Cole Haddon (C.H.), J.R. Jones (J.J.) and Kelly Vance (K.V.). For a schedule of repertory films, see One-Night Stands at the end of these listings. Please send info fourteen days before event date to editor@eastbayexpress.com

OPENING

Happy Tears Writer-director [illegible] whose teeth took a bite out of [illegible] genre, retreats a bit with this [illegible] family comedy about two [illegible] sisters (Parker Posey and Demi Moore) who return to Pittsburgh, Pa. to care for their [illegible] father (Rip Torn) with no help from Dad's crack-ho girlfriend (Ellen Barkin). Barkin's role as the [illegible] [illegible] Torn has played [illegible] mostly it's a showcase for Moore and Posey [illegible] [illegible] grace (95 min.) — K.V. (PCE)

Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers Bay Area documentary makers Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith give us a thorough history lesson on [illegible] the concept that "war thinker" [illegible] change of conscience in 1969 led to [illegible] the so-called "Pentagon Papers." The [illegible] of that "secret history of the Vietnam war" changed the concept of government secrecy forever, and Ellsberg has been [illegible] as a traitor or [illegible] depending on your politics. Then-President Richard Nixon comes off as a power-mad paranoiac, but then we already knew that. Still has relevance today, sadly (92 min.) [illegible]

North Face (Nordwand) North Face In 1936 Nazi Germany, two Bavarian mountaineers (played by Benno Fürmann and Florian Lukas) enter the competition to climb the [illegible] Face of Switzerland's Eiger Mountain [illegible] by the Hitler government's propaganda machinery. Once they get up on the rock walls and ice fields, however, all political [illegible] [illegible] Philipp Stölzl [illegible] incredible realism in the film's Swiss and Austrian locations, and the action bring a real-world touch of Nazi menace to the icy [illegible] Johanna Wokalek as a friendly reporter and Ulrich Tukur as a creepy newspaper editor (126 min.)

Showtimes Online

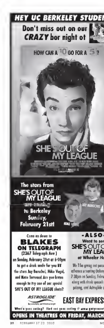
Movie showtimes and online ticket-buying at EastBayExpress.com

Oscar Nominated Shorts 2010 The grab bag of Oscar-nominated shorts — in both animated and live-action [illegible] The animations have a slight edge, especially Logorama, a wonderfully satirical "police chase" spoof that riffs on every corporate logo known to humanity, including Ronald McDonald as a desperado. Also superb: Nick Park's bakery-centric [illegible] A Matter of Loaf and Death, and [illegible] [illegible] look at the life of a young boy [illegible] in contemporary India (95 min.).

Shutter Island Martin Scorsese makes this drama set in the 1950s. Stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, and Ben Kingsley. AFC, CWC, [illegible]

Theater Guide

This guide explains the abbreviations at the end of each capsule. **AL** = Albany; **AFC** = Alameda Theatre & Cineplex; **BB** = Brenden Concord; **BB** = Blackhawk; **BP** = Brenden Pittsburg; **BS** = Bay Street; **CA** = California; **CAPH** = CineArts Pleasant Hill; [illegible] **CWC** = Century Walnut Creek; **DV** = [illegible] Valley; **GL** = Grand Lake; **JL** = Jack London; **LP** = La Peña; [illegible] **PM** = Piedmont; **RA** = Regal Antioch; [illegible] **UA** = UA Berkeley; **UAEB** = UA Emery Bay; **V** = Vine; **WWS** = West Wind Solano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The stars from SHE'S OUT OF MY LEAGUE ~~are coming~~ to Berkeley Sunday, February 21st!
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-ALSO-
Want to see SHE'S OUT OF MY LEAGUE at Wheeler Hall?
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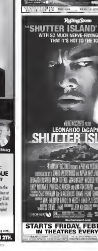
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Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel The Chipmunks are an acquired taste, much like the Three Stooges or Jerry Lewis. But Chipmunk fans of all ages will find plenty to chortle about in this fast-paced jive comedy, a mix of animation and live action that finds the boys contending with their ongoing 30-year showbiz career (they haven't aged five [illegible]), going to high school, a rival group of female singing chipmunks called the Chipettes, and their sleazy ex-manager (David Cross). Bagdasarian Productions' animation is [illegible] by [illegible]. Directed [illegible] by Betty Thomas (Dr. Dolittle 2) [illegible] (92 min.) (KLV, BC, SP, CH, CH, UAB)

An Education A precocious middle-class London high-school student named Jenny (in a star-making performance by Carey Mulligan) falls head over heels for an urbane, generous older man named David (Peter Sarsgaard) with a sense of charm [illegible] and takes her off with him to the opera, a trip to Paris, etc., circa 1961. But there's something a bit dodgy about David and his friends. Danish movie-maker director Lone Scherfig (who did Italian for Beginners) tells this cautionary tale with a maximum of detail and period style and lets her cast do the rest, led by Mulligan and Sarsgaard. Alfred Molina as Jenny's [illegible], Emma Thompson and Olivia Williams as her concerned [illegible], and Sally Hawkins in a quick, pithy role as the [illegible] woman. The smart screenplay was adapted by sometime-novelist Nick Hornby from a memoir by [illegible] Lynn Barber (95 min.) (KLV, ISS, CAPN, P, V)

Avatar Five years in the making, three-plus in the screening, writer-director James Cameron (The Terminator, The Abyss, Titanic) aims for epic sweep with his story of rapacious earthlings invading the heavily jungled planet of Pandora and trying to obliterate the tall, powerful, blue-skinned Na'vi in order to steal their minerals. The CGI visuals are certainly gorgeous — Day-Glo ferns, dino-tigers, flying dragons, raging rivers. And since — like the procedurals are slightly second-hand (à la Dances with Wolves, The New World, etc.) and the dialogue is laughable. There's a good guy, a [illegible] named Jake (Sam Worthington), with [illegible] against his role as a shape-shifting Avatar warrior [illegible]. The US military's [illegible] bad guys (Stephen Lang, Giovanni Ribisi) are standard-issue, as are the Na'vi [illegible], including Jake's princess girlfriend (voice of Zoe Saldana). Even the King of the World [illegible] (162 min.) (KLV, ALB, ISS, BC, SP, CWC, CH, CAPN, CH, CSC, RH, CCC, CL, RA, RH, UAB)

The Blind Side Based on the best-selling book by Michael Lewis, this potent [illegible] tells the story of Michael Oher, a gigantic black teenager from impoverished West Memphis who was accepted as a charity case by a local Christian academy and taken in and informally adopted by a wealthy [illegible] family; he became an All-American offensive tackle who was drafted in the first round this year by the Baltimore Ravens. The story is inspiring and involves sports, but all the [illegible] inspirational sports story would be wrong. Its real movie is Leigh Anne Tuohy (Sandra Bullock in a fine performance), the strong-willed [illegible] who [illegible] homeless boy with no social or academic skills into a functioning young man with a promising future. Some will call the movie [illegible], and they may be right, but as a fable about the power of giving, it [illegible] hard. John Lee Hancock (The Rookie) directed his own script, with Tim McGraw, Kathy Bates, and Quinton Aaron as Michael Oher (126 min.) (PJ, CWC, RA, RH, CCC, UAW)

The Book of Eli Denzel Washington stars in this post-apocalyptic fable as the guardian of a book that may contain the secrets to both humanity's sorry state and their possible redemption. Gary Oldman co-stars as a local heavy who [illegible] to steal the book. Directed by the Hughes brothers (118 min.) (ISS, BC, SP, RH, CH, CSC, RA, RH, JL, UAB)

Chance Pe Dance Genelia D'Souza and [illegible] in the role of a young man trying to break into Hollywood. Directed by Ken Ghosh

Crazy Heart Jeff Bridges gives a signature career performance as Bad Blake, a grizzled, boozy country music singer-songwriter intent on drinking himself into the ground on a nowhere circuit of Southwestern bars and bowling alleys. To the rescue comes Jean (Maggie Gyllenhaal), a single [illegible] with a few miles on her, as [illegible] and Tommy Sweet, Blake's one-time protégé and a rising country star (Colin Farrell). Can the old hoss turn himself around? The [illegible] screenplay, adapted by director Scott Cooper from Thomas Cobb's novel, [illegible] when Bridges [illegible] into one of his songs — they were written by T-Bone Burnett with Stephen Bruton and Ryan Bingham, and Bridges sings them with drunken authority. He gets hold of the character [illegible] based on Kris Kristofferson [illegible]. With Robert Duvall and Paul Herman (111 min.) (KLV, ALB, BC, CWC, CSC, CAPN, CA, PM, RA, RH, P)

Dear John An inconsequential [illegible] love [illegible] inconsequential [illegible] war [illegible], courtesy director Lasse

Hallström and [illegible] Hallström Sparks. An [illegible] (Channing Tatum) with a pathologically shy father [illegible] meets a vapid, [illegible] (Amanda Seyfried from Jennifer's Body) while on leave in their hometown of Charleston, SC, circa 2001. He ships out for several years, they [illegible] and that's it. [illegible] a bit more [illegible] support [illegible] and Henry [illegible] character support but it's not enough. Hallström has a history of [illegible] (The Cider House Rules, Chocolat, The Shipping News). Chalk up one more (105 min.) [illegible]

Edge of Darkness Police drama about a detective (Mel Gibson) investigating the death of his daughter. Directed by Martin Campbell (117 min.) [illegible]

Fantastic Mr. Fox Maybe all along Wes Anderson was an animation genius waiting to leave out, and perhaps his live-action movies were only rehearsals for this masterful retelling of Roald Dahl's [illegible] tale of a semi-retired fox (voice of George Clooney) and his animal friends and [illegible] planning [illegible] three mean old [illegible] farmers. Maybe. But there's no denying that the stop-motion animation, the attention to artistic detail, and the lasting unpredictability of *Fantastic Mr. Fox* are triumphant evidence of Anderson's storytelling talent, and that everything from the supporting voice roles (Bill Murray, Meryl Streep, Willem Dafoe, [illegible]) to the crafty little [illegible]. How can Anderson (*The Royal Tenenbaums*, *The Darjeeling Limited*) ever go back to ordinary live [illegible]? (87 min.) [illegible]

From Paris With Love Jonathan Rhys Meyers stars alongside John Travolta in this story of an undercover CIA agent and his first big job. Pierre Morel directs, as written by Luc Besson. [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] Khan [illegible] comedy about the search for a marriage [illegible]. Directed by [illegible].

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus Terry Gilliam's [illegible] most emotionally [illegible] film since *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* [illegible] children's [illegible] tale for [illegible] grown-ups. The [illegible] philosopher/charlatan Christopher Plummer [illegible] and his troupe wander the underbelly of contemporary England in a caravan, putting on shows and [illegible] squares to [illegible] psychedelic soul-searching behind a magic mirror. All the while, compulsive gambler [illegible] is making bets with the devil (Tom Waits) [illegible] the doctor's delectable teenage daughter (Lily Cole). We expect the visual [illegible] in a Gilliam project to be [illegible] as well as disturbing, but there's an extra dimension in this [illegible] fantastic [illegible] play: the final performance of Heath Ledger, as a [illegible] adopted by Parnassus. When Ledger died during production, his role was finished by [illegible] trio of [illegible]: Johnny Depp, Jude Law, and Colin Farrell. See it on the biggest screen you can and be swept away. Co-written by Gilliam and Charles McKeown (122 min.) [illegible]

Invictus Newly elected president Nelson Mandela (played by Morgan Freeman with gravity and unmistakable [illegible]) uses rugby, and especially Springbok [illegible] Francois Pienaar (Matt Damon with Afrikaans accent) to help unite and reconcile [illegible] blacks and whites in post-apartheid South Africa. The sports sequences in the 1995 Rugby World Cup are [illegible] and [illegible] Clint Eastwood [illegible] how to milk a [illegible] procedural for all it's worth, but Anthony Peckham's screenplay (adapted from John Carlin's book) forgets to fill in all but the [illegible] of the dramatic [illegible]. Might as well have been a documentary. Actor Tony Kgoroge does a nice job with the part of Mandela's security chief (134 min.) [illegible]

Ishqiya Vidya Balan, Naseeruddin Shah, and Arshad Warsi star in this tale of [illegible] romance. Directed by Abhishek Chaubey.

It's Complicated How to sort a [illegible] middle-aged [illegible] comedy [illegible]: Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin, and Steve Martin to portray it all [illegible] (what else?) but finally [illegible] her divorced but still interested husband and the [illegible] husband [illegible], respectively. Then stand back and let them work. Writer-director Nancy Meyers has [illegible] a career [illegible] (*Baby Boom*, *Father of the Bride*, etc.), and this time she's armed with a blue-ribbon cast plus a surprising amount of sex. The laughs keep on coming [illegible] of the [illegible] situations (118 min.) [illegible]

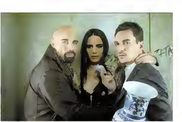
The Last Station Filmmaker Michael Hoffman's old-fashioned, literary tale stars Christopher Plummer as aged Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, and Helen Mirren as his combative wife Sofya, battling the famed [illegible] over his estate planning. When Plummer and Mirren go into their [illegible] by [illegible]. When James McAvoy (as a [illegible], Tolstoy's [illegible]) and Paul Giamatti (as Tolstoy's scheming [illegible]) [illegible] Hoffman's screenplay, adapted from the novel by Jay Parini, [illegible] a straightforward account of Tolstoy's last days. It may be a little too [illegible] McAvoy's [illegible] and his [illegible] girlfriend (Kerry Condon) to go with the Plummer-Mirren [illegible] (112 min.) [illegible]

Legion Biblical [illegible] and apocalyptic fable from director Scott Stewart. Paul Bettany and Dennis Quaid star (100 min.) [illegible]

The Lovely Bones Filmmaker Peter Jackson, of *Lord of the Rings* fame, [illegible] the [illegible] and energy in between (or is it purgatory?) [illegible] through fields of flowers [illegible] teenage sex-murder victim Susie Salmon (Saoirse Ronan from *Atonement*) [illegible] her revenge on the murderer (Stanley Tucci [illegible]) from up there in the heavenly [illegible] while her parents (Mark Wahlberg, Rachel Weisz) grieve for her down below. Much more interesting than CGI as paradise are the earthly interactions of Susie, her family, and her friends in their Seventies-era Pennsylvania [illegible]. Director/co-writer Jackson [illegible] adapted Alice Sebold's novel with Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens. [illegible] the same type of material much more convincingly in his 1994 drama *Heavenly Creatures*. Also with Susan Sarandon and Michael Imperioli (135 min.) [illegible]

My Name Is Khan Shahrukh Khan [illegible] drama. Directed by Karan Johar. [illegible]

Mysteries of Egypt National Geographic and a team of scientists reveal the architecture, legends, history, and most importantly [illegible] of ancient Egyptian civilization. [illegible]



From Paris With Love

Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief Filmmaker Chris Columbus brings ancient Greek mythology to contemporary America in the elaborate, commercially imaginative rite-of-passage fantasy involving [illegible] New York City teen Percy, also [illegible] (played by Logan Lerman). Seems Percy, [illegible] of his [illegible] (Catherine Keener) and the god [illegible] (Kevin McKidd) is gifted with magical powers and it's up to him with help from fellow demi-gods [illegible] Daddario (daughter of Athena) and goat-legged satyr [illegible] to go out [illegible] for Zeus' [illegible] lightning bolt, now in Hades. The [illegible] is nothing short of heavenly for Pierce Brosnan (Chiron), Sean Bean (Zeus), [illegible] (Persephone), and Joe Pantoliano (as Percy's [illegible] mortal stepdad), but the grand prize goes to Uma Thurman as snake-headed Medusa. It's also a pleasure to see Steve Coogan in hell. Craig Titley adapted the screenplay from Rick Riordan's

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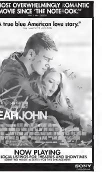

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young-adult novel. [illegible] (118 min.) [illegible]

Pirate Radio For people with [illegible] "life rock on the soundtrack, the film event of the year. But [illegible] the [illegible] of a crew of [illegible] deejays blasting the Kinks, Who, Troggs, Turtles, [illegible], Jeff Beck, Dusty Springfield, et al. to English listeners from a ship [illegible] in the North Sea. [illegible] are Philip Seymour Hoffman, Rhys Ifans, Bill Nighy, Nick Frost, and Tom Sturridge among the deejays, with a [illegible] Kenneth Branagh as the sinister government minister [illegible] to shut them down, and [illegible] as somebody's [illegible] It's a vinyl nerds' summer camp on the high seas. Directed with [illegible] by Richard Curtis (*Black Adder*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*) from his own screenplay. Britain title: *The Boat That Rocked* (135 min.) [illegible]

Precious [illegible] character study with a dollop of redemption thrown in. First-time actor Gabourey Sidibe acts with her whole body and seemingly has more [illegible] as [illegible] Jones, a Harlem teenager, circa 1987, who suffers all the slings and arrows [illegible] but at last, through it all, Precious [illegible] redemption [illegible] screenplay by [illegible] Geoffrey Fletcher's adaptation of author Sapphire's young-adult novel, [illegible] but he [illegible] Fine character support by Mo'Nique as the monster [illegible] as a classmate, and [illegible] (110 min.) [illegible]

The Princess and the Frog Disney's return to hand-drawn animation pays off triumphantly in this charming, [illegible] romantic comedy set in old New Orleans and the surrounding bayou and filled with [illegible] and a rich [illegible] African-American characters. In a clever switch, the [illegible] young woman named Tiana (Anika Noni Rose) kisses the enchanted prince-turned-frog, and she turns into a frog [illegible] voice cast: [illegible] Jenifer Lewis, Oprah Winfrey, [illegible] Goodman, Michael-Leon Wooley and Jim Cummings as Ray the Cajun firefly. [illegible] with [illegible] on Planet Mouse [illegible] Disney [illegible] by Ron Clements and John Musker [illegible] screenplay they [illegible] up with four other writers. Welcome back, Disney (97 min.) [illegible]

Saint John of Las Vegas Steve Buscemi returns to familiar territory with the [illegible] of John Alighieri [illegible] can't resist [illegible] through a routine series of [illegible] situations, as John and fellow insurance fraud investigator Virgil (Romany Malco) take a road trip from Albuquerque to [illegible] on the trail of a rogue [illegible] Sure it's [illegible] written and [illegible] episodic, but it's vintage Buscemi. Costarring Sarah Silverman as Jill, the [illegible] (85 min.) [illegible]

Sherlock Holmes [illegible] Downey Jr. [illegible] as the [illegible] English [illegible] while Jude Law [illegible] as Holmes' partner in [illegible] Dr. Watson. Both get a [illegible] workout as the pair of a mysterious black-magic cabal trying to [illegible] the British government. It's Guy Ritchie's idea of a [illegible] the story to [illegible] Victorian London, dress the boys in period finery, then give the [illegible] the same sort of [illegible] violence [illegible] and *Two Smoking Barrels*, [illegible] Did I mention the character [illegible] to be entertaining? With [illegible] support by Mark Strong as the bad guy [illegible] Rachel McAdams as Irene Adler. The [illegible] Arthur Conan Doyle [illegible] for Holmes, and [illegible] (128 min.) [illegible]

A Single Man Colin Firth, as a 1960s-era [illegible] gay man mourning the death of his longtime lover, gives a classy, tasteful [illegible] performance in fashion designer-turned-filmmaker Tom Ford's adaptation of Christopher Isherwood's novel. [illegible] Julianne Moore as George's [illegible] in Santa Monica. [illegible] Screenplay by Ford and David Scearce. [illegible] (101 min.) [illegible]

Solomon The story of [illegible] CSC

The Spy Next Door Wacky comedy about former CIA agent with [illegible] (Jackie Chan) [illegible] Directed by Brian Levant. (92 min.) [illegible]

Terribly Happy (Frygtelig lykkelig) We've seen this one before. An [illegible] policeman gets assigned to a village in the middle of nowhere and has to contend with [illegible] who are hiding a guilty secret. Danish director-co-writer Henrik Ruben Genz [illegible] atmosphere and the [illegible] (adapted with [illegible] from Erling Jepsen's novel) is mostly just a collection of [illegible] Starring Jakob Cedergren as the cop, Lene Maria Christensen as the [illegible] housewife, and Kim Bodnia as her husband. [illegible] (90 min.) [illegible]

To Be An Astronaut Wonder what it takes? Take a trip inside the gates of NASA for an IMAX-enhanced view of everything from training to lift-off (40 min.) CSC

Tooth Fairy For the crime of [illegible] a kid's dream, a self-centered, [illegible] ice hockey player (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson) is sentenced, by enchantment, to become an actual tooth fairy, complete with wings and fairy suit. Romping on the ridiculousness factor of this forgettable [illegible] are the appearances of Julie Andrews as the lady godmother and Billy Crystal as a [illegible] So this is how [illegible] are spending their twilight years. Also starring the [illegible] Ashley Judd. Directed [illegible]

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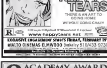

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Shutter Island

by memorial Musicals (111 min.). (KV)(BT, BC, BP, CS, CH, CUC, TM, BH, DEC, RA, RH, WMS)

Up in the Air George Clooney once again cements a slick corporate front with a hidden conscience here, for Director Jason Reitman (*Juno*). Clooney is "termination facilitator" Ryan Bingham, who ... jets in and out American ... and Wichita, firing redundant employees by the hundreds and ... his one true passion — racking up millions of frequent-flyer miles. On his trail, he meets a newly minted business-school piranha named Alex (Anna Kendrick, ...) and feels ... further. And maybe for himself. The screenplay, by Reitman and Sheldon Turner from Walter Kirn's novel, sums up some of the most horrible trends of the 21st century [illegible] handful of [illegible] laugh [illegible]. With Vera Farmiga as a [illegible] (110 min.). (KV)(BS, CWC, CEPH, CUC, CF, CCC, CA, PM, CRC, RH, UAD)

Valentine's Day Light, fluffy, instantly forgettable [illegible] gives [illegible] Garry Marshall a chance to spread his special brand of [illegible] of characters in different [illegible]. Jessica Biel, Bradley Cooper, Julia Roberts, Eric Dane, [illegible] Jamie Foxx, [illegible] Shirley MacLaine, [illegible] Hathaway as a phone sex entertainer but it [illegible] Katherine Fugate [illegible] Abby Kohn and Marc Silverstein, is enough to [illegible] (125 min.). (KV)(BC, BP, CWC, CH, CEPH, CH, CUC, [illegible] GL, [illegible] RA, RH, RL, RCC, WMS)

When in Rome Comedy about a New Yorker (Kristen Bell) who finds love in Rome after stealing coins from a [illegible] fountain of love. Directed by Mark Steven Johnson (91 min.). (CWC, CEPH, CH, CUC, [illegible] RA, WMS)

The White Ribbon (Das weisse Band) Nothing is ever easy with filmmaker Michael Haneke and his provocative, [illegible] dramas of people in [illegible] conflict (*The Piano Teacher*, *Caché*, *Funny Games*). This portrait of a Northern German farming village a year before World War I is typically challenging. The seemingly peaceful community is actually a [illegible] of hatred and violence. [illegible] Haneke [illegible] the [illegible] unsolved mystery [illegible] the town [illegible] Christian Friedel [illegible] and Leonie Benesch as the [illegible] (144 min.). (KV)(CAPH, AL)

The Wolfman Gothic as all hell, Universal [illegible] its famed horror franchise very stylishly indeed, updated by director Joe Johnston with splashes of monster films. [illegible] Del Toro has the requisite [illegible] for the role of Lawrence Talbot, who returns to his dreary family seat in England to find his father (Anthony Hopkins, [illegible]) and his [illegible] Natalie [illegible] for him [illegible] of a [illegible] monster prowling the countryside. Johnston (*Jurassic Park III*) sets a foreboding mood with production design (Rick Heinrichs), monster score (Danny Elfman) and the necessarily hairy makeup effects (Rick Baker), but more importantly with the screenplay by Andrew Kevin Walker and David Self, adapted from Curt Siodmak's 1941 original. It's not insultingly dumb — that's refreshing in a 2010 horror pic. Character parts are ably staffed as well, especially Hugo Weaving as a Scotland Yard inspector, Geraldine Chaplin as the Gypsy woman, and Art Malik as laugh: Sir John's manservant. It's definitely something to howl about (125 min.). (KV)(BC, BP, CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CUC, TM, BH, BCC, GL, CRC, RA, RH, RL, UAD)

The Young Victoria Emily Blunt may be in slightly over her head in this [illegible] straightforward [illegible] the conflict of [illegible] the grooming to power of England's [illegible] reigning monarch, Queen Victoria. She [illegible] a go anyway. Director Jean-Marc Vallée [illegible] on the opulent scenery. Amid [illegible] all pretenders to the throne while remaining [illegible] young Prince Albert (Rupert Friend of *Chéri*), a would-be German spy in the royal household. [illegible] the perils [illegible] palace, and [illegible] Paul Bettany as the prime Minister Lord Melbourne, Miranda Richardson as Vicky's [illegible] Thomas Kretschmann as scheming King Leopold of Belgium — we pretty good. And the [illegible] welcome change from the sound-stage [illegible] of Hollywood. If only [illegible] more [illegible] the [illegible] Coffee Table Film [illegible] (100 min.). (KV)(RA, [illegible])

ONE NIGHT STANDS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Prince of Broadway (100 min., 2008): African Film Festival (PFA, 7:30)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

That Night's Wife (67 min., 1930): Heroes of Silent Cinema: Yasujiro Ozu and Hou Hsiao-hsien (PFA, 7:00)

Bye Bye Blues (112 min., 1963): The Kids Are Alright: Post-Fifties Musicals and the Kids of Youth Culture (PFA, 8:30)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

The Way of the Wind (65 min., 1931): Heroes [illegible] Early Frank Capra (PFA, 6:30)

A City of Sadness (158 min., 1989): Masters of Silent Cinema: Yasujiro Ozu and Hou Hsiao-hsien (PFA, 8:00)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21

For the Love of It: 7th Annual Festival of Amateur Filmmaking (50 min., 1972-2008): Celebrating Amateur Film (PFA, 3:00)

Kids (121 min., 1979): The Kids Are Alright: Post-Fifties Musicals and the Kids of Youth Culture (PFA, 5:30)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Nothing Is Confessions of a Trick Baby (87 min., 1999): Free Movie Night (924 Gilman St., Berkeley, 7:30)

Three by Nathaniel Dorsky (56 min., 2008-9): Nathaniel Dorsky in Person (PFA, 7:30)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

In My Genes (78 min., 2009): African Film Festival (PFA, 7:00)

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Q&A with the film's subject, Daniel Ellsberg [illegible]
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Q&A with the film's subject, Daniel Ellsberg [illegible]
[illegible]

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Eric Swedlund

Fanfarlo

Growing up in Sweden, Simon Balthazar had a house full of instruments but no real musicians in his family to guide him in any one direction.

That childhood introduction to music — inventive, unrestrained, and enchanting — carried through to Fanfarlo, the band Balthazar formed when he moved from Gothenburg to London in 2006.

Relying on mostly acoustic instruments, Fanfarlo nevertheless plays and records with a distinct sense of *grandeur*, building a rich and orchestral sound that relies on trumpet, mandolin, cello, violin, ukulele, clarinet, and melodica far more than the standard rock backbone of guitar, bass, and drums.

"I grew up in a house with not many records but a lot of instruments," said Balthazar during a tour stop in Copenhagen. "No one in my family is a musician, but the instruments were just lying all around. It was a mix of things people had taken lessons on and abandoned. I would learn to play a few chords here and there, a few notes here and there — mandolin, ukulele, piano, glockenspiel. That kind of stuff was always around, so it feels natural for me to write for these instruments."

Drawing attention in both Europe and the United States, Fanfarlo's 2009 album *Reservoir* is a forceful debut, a lush and ornate record that's earned the band accolades (NPR's "All Songs Considered" named it best new band of 2009) and comparisons to Arcade Fire, Neutral Milk Hotel, and Belle and Sebastian.

Fanfarlo began as simply a recording project for Balthazar, who says he moved to London with no specific intentions of forming a band. But the combination of his homemade demos and new friends interested in playing music together gradually led to the full band.

"When I moved I got to know a lot of people who were doing music and those songs quite quickly became something that we could start playing live even though it was quite different from what we're doing now," he said. "People who were coming to those early shows are now in the band. We put out a few seven inches even before there was really a band. The first few were just from bedroom recordings."

According to Balthazar, he had the big, orchestral sound in mind from the beginning and knew that the band had to have a trumpet player above all else. "When I first started listening to music I fell in love with the trumpet, bands like Belle and Sebastian and Neutral Milk Hotel that have taken that trumpet sound, kind of like Sixties pop or even Spanish music," he said. "So I was looking specifically for a trumpet player."

Now a five-piece — Balthazar (vocals, guitar, clarinet), Cathy Lucas (vocals, mandolin, violin, keyboards), Leon Beckenham (keyboards, trumpet), Justin Finch (bass, vocals), and Amos Memon (drums) — the band also included guitarist Mark West until he left in 2008.

Naming his band after a dancer/actress character in Charles Baudelaire's novella *La Fanfarlo*, Balthazar is both well read and a skillful songwriter in his own right. Though he admits that a tongue-in-cheek remark in *Spin Magazine* — "We're intellectuals" — was taken too seriously, Balthazar says the band members are all drawn to philosophy, literature, and film — any sort of artistic expression that is challenging and compelling.

Though enigmatic, Fanfarlo's lyrics reflect that well of knowledge. Balthazar leans toward storytelling, often using historical characters as jumping-off points, rather than writing lyrics that could be confused for his own diary.

Reading about Harry Houdini, Balthazar came across the character of Father Marcello Pellegrino Ernetti, a Benedictine priest and exorcist who reportedly claimed to have invented a time viewer. On "The Walls Are Coming Down," Balthazar uses that sense of escapism to look at reality itself falling apart as historical eras fade into one another: *The preachers and books of your empire will fight here alone,/Some day they will be forgotten and die one by one.* The song's video even features an escape artist suspended upside down above the band as they play on stage, shadows dancing on the back wall. Writhing and contorting, the escape artist has freed himself from a straitjacket by the time the song ends.

Show Details
Fanfarlo plays the Great American Music Hall (859 O'Farrell St., San Francisco) on Monday, Feb. 22, 8 p.m. $16. GAMH.com

Balthazar drew inspiration from Howard Hughes for "I'm A Pilot," sketching out those famous eccentricities as a tragic fall from grace: *Like a stone, you'll come back when thrown up.* But alongside that unraveling madness is a noble persistence, a belief in his inviolable essence as a pilot: *If I stay in this room/They'll remember me for my youth.*

"Songwriting for us is something that starts as a very introspective and brooding affair," said Balthazar. "It's a quite solitary thing. I'll write songs on my own first, often sitting up at night. Then we put them together and have fun with that material. I work quite a lot around melodies more than anything else. That's why it starts out as introspective and obscure, dark lyrics and comes out as a pop song."

When it came time to record *Reservoir*, Fanfarlo whittled down a list of producers to Peter Katis (The National, Interpol), their dream choice, and took off for Connecticut for six weeks of recording in October 2007. "It just seemed right," said Balthazar. "We'd never met him, but most importantly we liked the sound of the records he made. It was important to get away from London and record in a small town in America with nothing else to do."

Reservoir is 11 songs that span 43 minutes and with buzz built from CMJ and SXSW appearances, Fanfarlo self-released the album, originally selling downloads for $1. The official widespread release was in October 2009 as the first record from Canvasback Music's joint venture with Atlantic Records. Heavy touring in both Europe and the United States has filled the band's time during the past year.

"It's important to realize the recording process and playing live are two very different things," he said. "We don't necessarily try to do everything the same way. Some songs are pretty close, other songs were recorded in a certain way because of the studio we recorded in, with lots of amazing equipment. We did work quite a lot with 10, 20, 30 overdubs of the same thing, a lot of layering of things. We have a fairly complicated live setup as well. We do switch instruments a lot, and everybody sings. To play live is to bring the music to people and to meet them before and after the show, and the room we play in dictates the sound and the mood and what we chose to play."

Balthazar says he finds touring interesting, between the rhythm of the travel and the differences between the United States and European venues. Plus, there's the forced perspective that comes from living so intensely in the present moment.

"You really kind of get to know yourself and the people you're with and become a family," he said. "Mentally, it's a really interesting place to be. You never really know what time of the day it is or what day of the week it is. I think you really learn to take things as they come and learn to adapt. In an odd way, you learn to focus and enjoy the here and now." ●

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Tinariwen

DESERT ROCK

Tinariwen brings rebel music out of the Southern Sahara.

By Rey Calle

A lone Hendrix blues riff, deep, rough and insistent, slashes through the aural space. Broken down and repeated, the opening riff is joined by the offbeat upstrokes of a second, treble electric guitar establishing a little counterpoint. A fast rap barely breaks through the sound of the guitars, becoming louder when it morphs into a sung chorus with backing vocals (three, maybe four words). About four minutes in, the guitars drop out and the song is stripped down: a fast rap over a loopy funk bass line, accompanied by handclaps and soft percussion. The offbeat guitar upstrokes return joined by an arpeggiated riff on a second guitar, then a lead guitar. The vocals become secondary as the guitars propel the song to its ending and the opening riff returns. While the description could fit a performance of an up-and-coming indie band at the Noise Pop festival later this month, it is not describing the work of an American band. Or even a Latin American or European band. No, it is from one of the most remote outposts of rock 'n' roll: the southern Sahara.

In the southern Sahara during the late 1970s, young Malian Touaregs living in exile after the government crushed an uprising in the early 1960s created a new style of guitar-driven rock. The songs they wrote mixed traditional Touareg melodies and rhythms with Moroccan folk music, rai, and rock; the lyrics spoke of exile, homesickness, and political struggle. Soon the locals began to call them "Kel Tinariwen" ("The desert boys"); later, simply Tinariwen. Within a few years, the group had become the musical voice of the Touareg rebel movement. Their songs, distributed on cassettes throughout the Sahara, became a powerful tool in the struggle to reclaim Touareg sovereignty. In 1990, disillusioned with the movement, the members of Tinariwen slipped away from the rebel base and returned to Mali shortly before a second Touareg rebellion began. Six months later, the Malian government offered the rebel movement peace terms, and the members of Tinariwen happily returned to being musicians. A decade later, in 2001, they burst into the "world" music market after an epic performance at Mali's first *Festival in the Desert*.

"Tenhert," the song described at the beginning of this piece, from the 2009 CD *Imidiwan*, shows Tinariwen today. To hear its groove-based sound as it was when the band took off, you only need to listen to its 2001 release, *The Radio Tisdas Sessions*. It can be described as a modernization of traditional Touareg music with an electric guitar taking the place of the traditional lute. But a major change in musical aesthetics was also taking place. Percussion is used alongside the guitars. It's subtle, but drums with lutes is an aesthetic no-no that had persisted longer among the Touareg than most other groups in West Africa. *The Radio Tisdas Sessions* was rough, live performances recorded on a solar-powered tape deck at a Touareg radio station in Kidal, Mali, but the new sound it showcased was a success at home and in the world music market. Tinariwen began a heavy touring schedule, which hasn't let up.

The band was noticeably tighter on 2004's *Amassakoul*. On 2007's *Aman Iman*, Tinariwen emerged as a rock band. Tinariwen brings a gentler voice to its latest release, *Imidiwan*. The album has been described as being as much a rich soundscape of Touareg life and that's a fair take. Not to say there aren't hard edges. The last two minutes of "Tenhert" are pure rock brilliance.

The recorded work of Tinariwen is satisfying and has flashes of brilliance, but the band is at its best live. Southern Saharan rock bands like Terakaft, Tartit, and Etran Finatawa are all following in Tinariwen's wake, but each adds something new to the mix. A new, old spin on rock; only this time it's coming from the Sahara. ●

Show Details
Tinariwen performs on Sunday, Feb. 21, at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre (3301 Lyon St., San Francisco), 7 p.m. $25-$65. SFJAZZ.org or 866-920-5299.

To share this story, go to: ebx.by/p/tinariwen

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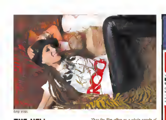

Empire Isis.

THE NEW BLACKFACE

Blacking Up shows white people stealing from hip-hop culture — and black people analyzing them.

By Rachel Swan

It's easy to see why white people embrace hip-hop. As Andrea Van Winkle, a woman from a small town in Indiana, put it, "I was just trying to be cool." Interviewed for the new PBS documentary *Blacking Up: Hip-Hop's Remix of Race and Identity*, Winkle came from a place so white it had all-white race riots. And yet, through the portal of MTV, she and her friends managed to voyeuristically experience the inner city. They wore baggy jeans, bandannas, and cornrows, endured taunts in the halls, and got suspended for dressing inappropriately — at a school that condoned KKK inspired paraphernalia, Winkle said. Their case produced an odd moral conundrum: Should we applaud these white chicks for trying to diversify their environment — albeit through caricature? Or were they behaving as reprehensibly as their more conventionally racist peers?

It's a thorny question, and one that the documentary doesn't answer to any satisfying degree. Yet it provides a fascinating examination of white people who appropriate African-American culture. *Blacking Up* begins with a drive along the backroads of suburban Indiana, where much of the film takes place. With a few establishing shots of manicured lawns, picket fences, and identical boxy houses, director Robert A. Clift indicates that this is not a film about hip-hop, or African Americans, or even race in the larger sense of the word. It's a film about white people. More specifically, it's a film about a certain type of white people — wiggas, minstrels wannabes, afrophiles — who try to act black, usually without leaving their safe white coves.

Thus the film offers us a whole parade of white people, mostly white performers with varying degrees of fame. Among them are rappers like Sage Francis, Aesop Rock, Vanilla Ice, and Eden, a weird girl Rasta duo called Empire Isis, and a hip-hop cover band called "Too White Crew." (The very concept of "hip-hop covers" is enough to cause cognitive dissonance, since it requires the band to resample already-sampled material.) Some are more sympathetic than others. Aesop Rock is a fairly deft rapper who expresses heartfelt adoration for his African-American peers. He admits, in a particularly telling moment of the film, that he's often wished he were born in a different body. Others are a little more untoward — Vanilla Ice will never quite recover the shame of going multiplatinum with a fake biography about growing up in the 'hood. The women in Empire Isis seem the most genuinely psychotic, with their blond dreads and fake Rastafarian accents.

Intercut between these interviews are archival shots of Elvis, Al Jolson, and all the famous minstrels of times past, and the requisite interviews with head-scratching academics — 90 percent of whom are African American. Thus Amiri Baraka, Paul Mooney, Greg Tate, Nelson George, and Chuck D all get to pontificate on this new form of colonialism and wonder why white people won't just stay in their natural habitat. All of these academics have built whole careers analyzing this very theme, so it's kind of a no-brainer. There's even an actual hip-hop tour bus, in which the African-American guides lead their flock on a safari through certain New York City boroughs.

Blacking Up isn't so much a morality tale as a historical digest, and Clift never goes so far as to condemn any of his subjects. He does have a fairly interesting way of linking current trends back to the whole minstrel lineage, drawing connections between, say, *The Jazz Singer* and Eminem. His montage sequences are fairly effective, though they're not the film's real payoff. It's Paul Mooney who steals the show, as usual. ●

Show Details

Blacking Up airs on KQED on Tuesday, Feb 23 at 10 p.m. BlackingUpMovie.com

To share this story, go to: ebx.ly/blackface

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EAR BUD

HONORING SWEET JIMMIE

Plus a black metal doc comes to Berkeley and a bunch of new releases.

Kathleen Wentz

"Sweet Jimmie" Ward, the man who owned and operated Oakland nightclub Sweet Jimmie's at 577 18th Street, died Friday, Feb. 5, at the age of 74 due to heart problems, according to the *Oakland Tribune*. Ward, a former longshoreman who often wore a ship captain's hat, had been in the bar business for more than forty years. Sweet Jimmie's (located in the space now occupied by **the New Parish**), opened in 1987, was a popular spot for the well-heeled mature crowd, attracting local celebrities and players from the Raiders and the A's. Its Saturday night lip-syncing contests were broadcast on *Soul Beat*, and at one point it was one of the biggest live-music clubs in Oakland. Sweet Jimmie's son, **David Ward**, took over the club around 2004 and changed the format from blues and soul to more hip-hop-oriented. However, the Wards closed the club in April 2006 after numerous problems with police and with city officials due to nearby violence. "In all their attempts to shut us down, it just wasn't worth the gamble," said son David, aka Sweets, in a 2006 interview with the *Express*.

A Lifetime Achievement Award Show & Benefit for Sweet Jimmie will be held on Sunday, February 21, at **Kimball's** (522 2nd St., Oakland), starting at 5 p.m. Tickets cost $25. To purchase, call 510-681-5422, 510-417-2380, or 510-499-4071.

Black Metal Comes to Berkeley

A black metal documentary that's gained cultish popularity despite hardly any advertising is coming to Berkeley's **Elmwood Theater** (2966 College Ave.) starting March 5. *Until the Light Takes Us*, directed by formerly San Francisco-based filmmakers **Aaron Aites** and **Audrey Ewell**, tells the story of black metal — and, in particular, the ideology behind the music genre that resulted in numerous (and highly sensationalized) church burnings, suicides, and murders in the mid-Nineties in Norway. To understand what this movement is truly about, the filmmakers moved to Norway for several years and interviewed musicians such as **Fenriz** of **Darkthrone**, **Frost** of **Satyricon**, and **Varg Vikernes** (who was convicted of the murder of his **Mayhem** bandmate). It's the first time that the documentary is screening in the Bay Area since its limited run at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts last year. The *Express* is sponsoring this screening.

Oakland Compilation CD Party

Beatbeat Whisper's Davyd Nereo has put together a compilation CD of fifteen Oakland bands and solo artists called *Our Last Bastion of Hope*. Featuring artists such as **Ash Reiter**, **the Blank Tapes**, **Belly of the Whale**, **Jen Weisberg**, **Mark Deutsch**, **Lavender Pine**, **Quinn Deveaux**, **Roberto Miguel**, **Soft Shells**, **Ayla Nereo**, **Zach Houston**, and more, the album was the second such compilation that Nereo has put out. Other local comps have been organized by **Mott Adams**, **Greg Ashley**, and others, and "there are more in the pipeline," says Nereo. "There are also cool comps from Portland (TIF and others), Santa Cruz, Sonoma County. I think it's a thing like mixtapes that's been made easier through the Internet and other digital means."

Get a sampling of the music on *Last Bastion* and buy the record at this Friday, Feb. 19's free CD release party at the **Uptown** (1928 Telegraph Ave., Oakland). The all-acoustic night will feature performances by Belly of the Whale, Roberto Miguel, Jen Weisberg Experience, and **Isabella**. Starts at 9 p.m.

Three-Dot Roundup

During the month of February, **Amoeba Music** is raising money for **Doctors Without Borders** working in Haiti by donating and matching sales of certain titles, available at Amoeba.com. The indie record store is also raising money at all three of its stores, and all of those donations will also be matched by Amoeba (up to $1,000 per individual donation). ... **Bridge Artspace** (23 Maine Ave., Richmond), a former storage facility that was recently transformed into an art space, will offer a session to teach musicians how to put together a proper promo pack. Moderated by **Sydney Matrick**, a producer at **Point Richmond Music**, **"Get Booked"** will include a panel of professionals to "give you tips and answer your questions." It happens on Saturday, Feb. 20, 1-4 p.m. $35. ... Oakland band **Religious Girls** is offering its five-song EP *Open Your Heart to Fantasy* for download on a sliding scale (minimum $5) at ReligiousGirls.bandcamp.com. The noise-rock foursome is currently on a small break to work on a new live set and EP. ... **Ben Bernstein**, a [illegible] engineer and producer, is offering specials at his **Petting Zoo Studio** in Oakland. Book three days of studio time or three-song packages during the month of February and get 15 percent off the usual rate. Also, first time clients will receive a $150/day rate. Contact pettingzoostudio@gmail.com for more information. ... Bay Area alternative band **Addison** will celebrate the release of its *Lay the Buddha Down* EP at **Cafe du Nord** (2170 Market St., San Francisco) on Friday, Feb. 19, 9:30 p.m., $10. ... **Stripmall Architecture** will unveil some of its new material for the first time at the **Retox Lounge** (628 20th St., San Francisco) on Friday, Feb. 19. The band will not only play songs from its forthcoming album *Feathersongs for Factory Girls*, but also will offer a limited number of promo copies of its new single, limited edition posters, and display its album art for its remix project. 9:30 p.m., $8. ... **Noise Pop** kicks off Feb. 18 with a pre-party at the **California Academy of Sciences** (55 Music Concourse Dr., San Francisco). Performers include **Brookhaven**, **the Frail**, **DJ Sleazemore**, and Popscene's **Disco Shawn**. 6-11 p.m., $12. ... **Veil Veil Vanish** releases its album *Change in the Neon Light* on Feb. 23. ●

To share this story, go to: ebx.by.pr/earbud

Ear Bud is culled from our music blog, Ear Bud.

CD REVIEWS

COLD SWEATS

Tributes to early inspiration, woozy shoegaze, and chamber-like folk.

Angelique Kidjo

Õyö

On *Õyö* Kidjo pays tribute to the songs that inspired her to sing. She opens the set with "Zelie," a hit for an early idol, Togo's Bella Bellow. Kidjo grabs your attention with a series of stunning sustained notes that only hint at her power. She follows up with a mellow R&B-flavored take of Santana's "Samba Pa Ti," featuring a muted trumpet solo from guest Roy Hargrove. Curtis Mayfield's "Move On Up" gets an Africanized arrangement that features multi-textured percussion and Afro-beat horn stabs from Brooklyn's Antibalas. John Legend joins in for a vocal exchange that shows off soul singing's spiritual side.

Miriam Makeba was another major influence and gets a nod with two songs she brought to international attention: "Mbube" (aka "The Lion Sleeps Tonight") and "Lakutshu Llanga." Kidjo sings the latter with the loose, lilting phrasing that marked Makeba's style, while "Mbube" is delivered in Zulu with a mid-tempo arrangement that lets Kidjo slide up and down the scale, showing off her emotional range. "Cold Sweat" is revamped with hints of Cuba and Africa in its driving backbeat. Kidjo's wicked vocal, full of shrieks, grunts and soaring grace notes, would have made James Brown proud. (Razor and Tie)

— j. poet

Angelique Kidjo plays Zellerbach Hall (UC Berkeley) on Feb. 28, 8 p.m. $22-$48. CalPerfs.berkeley.edu.

Boy in the Bubble

The King

Boy in the Bubble singer Josh Seidenfeld made an auspicious choice by recording his sophomore album in an overheated Los Angeles studio. Either the sweltering air or the cool Tecate had a salutary effect on his music. It made his guitar chords swell and reverberate, veering from shoegaze rock into psychedelia. Not to mention that Seidenfeld's voice befits such environs. It's drifty, woozy and languorous, and seems to flatten over the course of a line. He luxuriates in certain sounds. He stretches vowels, pronounces each "s" like a "z," and trills each "l," singing the word "cling" as though it had an extra syllable. He's vaguely John Lennon-ish minus the chalky British accent. (Seidenfeld does, admittedly, have the hint of a Brit pop drawl.) It's not clear whether he's had a lot of formal musical training; most likely Seidenfeld learned his craft by obsessively listening to old records and playing guitar in his bedroom. Indeed, *The King* has that dreamy, slightly underexposed tone of a musician who works intuitively.

It's an expansive album, in terms of both mood and texture. Seidenfeld developed the concept, then recorded with a rotating cast of characters: Noah Litt and Sam Raver on guitar, Satch Pillar on piano, Cian Moodal and Jordan Richardson on drums, Jesse Ingalls and Jack Passion on bass, and Josh Litt providing Wurlitzers. (Boy in the Bubble now includes Pillar on keys, Will Crew on bass, Tony Esterbrooks on drums, and Justin Butler on guitar.) Seidenfeld is the glue that holds it all together. He sounds most at ease singing love ballads (his best is "Can I Ride With You?"), but he's also capable of eliciting pain. His song "In the Company Town" is about factory workers. "We Walked" is about death. The title track is a revenge fantasy in which a small kid stabs an abusive adult. It starts off *sweet* — creepily sweet, in fact — then crescendos.

When Seidenfeld sings about love, he slurs and stretches out the words. When he gets angry he sings with high, steely resolve. In either case, it's dazzling. (Red Cat Records)

— Rachel Swan

Boy in the Bubble plays Feb. 19 at Bottom of the Hill (1233 17th St., SF). 9 p.m. $10-12. BottomoftheHill.com

Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill

Welcome Here Again

Most of the eighteen traditional Irish instrumentals on *Welcome Here Again* are labeled either jigs or reels, yet they are not rendered by County Clare-born, Connecticut-based violinist Martin Hayes and Chicago guitarist mandolinist Dennis Cahill as music to accompany a floor full of dancers. The two men, who have performed together off and on for nearly three decades, instead use folk melodies as a foundation on which to construct elegant chamber-like art music better suited to listening than to dancing, though such numbers as "The High Jig" and "The Galtee Hunt" have enough bounce to get some up and moving.

Both are virtuosos on their respective instruments, but they seldom show off. Hayes bows sweeping, sometimes slow melodic lines, at times tinged with blues or even Chinese flavors, around which Cahill gently weaves intricately finger-picked ornamentations. The moods they create are often serene, evoking the sense of peacefulness some find in New Age music. Yet unlike the vapidity associated with most New Age sounds, the duo's creations sparkle with musical adventure and depth of feeling. By grounding themselves in a time-honored tradition while being unafraid to take it in new directions, Hayes and Cahill have come up with a fresh take on Irish music that is satisfying to both mind and soul. (Green Linnet/Compass)

— Lee Hildebrand

Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill play Freight & Salvage (2020 Addison St., Berkeley) on Feb. 20, 8 p.m. $28.50-$27.50. FreightandSalvage.org

To share this story, go to: ebx.by/od3

Lila Nelson

We Never Came

This short but sweet EP is a perfect little taste of what Lila Nelson can do. With a style that blends folk, pop, and indie and a softly lovely voice, Nelson is a classic old-school singer-songwriter in the Joni Mitchell tradition. In a sea of throwaway pop idols, it's nice to see a few real musicians still around. (self-released)

At Subterranean Arthouse (2179 Bancroft Way, Berkeley) Sunday, Feb. 21, 8 p.m. $10

Aaron Germain

Before You Go

Veteran bass-player-for-hire Aaron Germain proves his skill on this release. Even if progressive jazz isn't really your thing, you have to admire the degree of technical prowess on display here. Germain is a talented musician and he's assembled an impressive collection of locals to back him up. (self-released)

At Rassela's (1534 Fillmore St., San Francisco) Monday, Feb. 22, 8 p.m. TBA

Rykarda Parasol

For Blood and Wine

Imagine that Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen had a baby and raised her in a cool dive bar — that baby would be Rykarda Parasol. With a deep, throaty voice and some deliciously nasty lyrics, she's a great antidote to all that is banal and tedious in the current music scene. Think dark cabaret — it's awesome stuff. (self-released)

At the Hemlock Tavern (1131 Polk St., San Francisco) Thursday, Feb. 18, 9 p.m. $6

Addison

Applied Mythology

This EP will make you wish Addison would hurry up and release a full album. With crunchy, jagged rock guitars and melodic vocals, "Freeze Out" falls at the heavier end of the indie spectrum. Addison has been around for a while and it shows — its sound is tight and well arranged. Catchy and immensely likable. (self-released)

At Cafe Du Nord (2170 Market St., San Francisco) Friday, Feb. 19, 9:30 p.m., $10

Bay Area bands, show us what you've got. Send CDs to Local Licks c/o the *East Bay Express*.
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Montana Slim, 49 Special, Bucky Walters
SAT FEB 20 • Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill
Irish fiddle & guitar duo, Chris Caswell opens
pre-show Q&A at 7 pm
SUN FEB 21 • Asylum Street Spankers
Salvation & Sin tour, the Hendrixes open
MON FEB 22 • Classical@theFreight
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www.myspace.com/dietsnaks

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www.planetloopmusic.com

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www.hipbones.net

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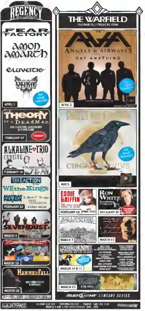

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FEAR FACTORY
AMON AMARTH
ELUVEITIE
OH SALE SUNDAY!
APRIL 9
THEORY OF A DEADMAN
FEBRUARY 17
ALKALINE TRIO
CURSIVE
FEBRUARY 19
TAKE ACTION
WE the Kings
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MARCH 26
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SAY ANYTHING
APRIL 5
OH SALE SUNDAY!
CIRCA SURVIVE
MAY 5
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RON WHITE
FEBRUARY 20
KILLSWITCH ENGAGE
MARCH 7
Smokey Robinson
MARCH 13
MARCH 10 & 11
MARCH 23
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CONCERTS & CLUBS

THURSDAY 18

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible]

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible]

Rock & Pop

[illegible]

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible]

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible]

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible]

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible]

Rock & Pop

[illegible]

FRIDAY 19

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible]

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible]

Rock & Pop

[illegible]

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible]

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible]

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible]

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible]

Rock & Pop

[illegible]

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible]

SATURDAY 20

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible]

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible]

Kids

[illegible]

Rock & Pop

[illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible], Stork Club, 9 pm. $5

[illegible] [illegible] Babylon / Soul Broker, Hellbeard, & Curmudgeon BC, Oakland Metro Operahouse, 8 pm, $10

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible] Folk Entertainment [illegible]'s Carnival, 8 pm, free

[illegible] [illegible] Festival [illegible] featuring Gregory [illegible], [illegible] Levy, [illegible] Coco Tea, Tarrus Riley, & [illegible], Fox Theater, 8 pm, $35-$39.50

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] The [illegible], 8 pm, $6

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Hall, 8 pm, $14-$45

[illegible] [illegible] featuring [illegible] & Mystic Man, 11 [illegible], [illegible], 9 pm, $5-$15

[illegible] Ashkenaz, 9 pm, $15

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

Bluegrass & Old-Time [illegible] featuring Old [illegible] Road, [illegible] County Professional [illegible] Sippers, [illegible], [illegible] Band [illegible], & Anderson Family Bluegrass [illegible], American Hall, 4 pm, $5

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] & Blues, [illegible], 9 pm, $12

[illegible] Festival & [illegible] Festival [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], 1 & 3 pm, $9 adults, $6 kids

John [illegible] Trio w/ Charlie [illegible], Great American [illegible] Hall, 8:30 pm, $30

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Band w/ [illegible], Caffe [illegible], 10:30 am-12:15 pm, free

Trio [illegible] [illegible] Bluegrass Band w/ [illegible] & Suzy Thompson, Slim's, 8 pm, $16-$18

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible], Café du Nord, 8 pm, $13-$15

Square Dance Extravaganza featuring [illegible] Town [illegible], [illegible] Pig [illegible], Swedish American Hall, 8 pm, $15

[illegible] of [illegible] w/ [illegible], El Rio, 7 pm, free

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] [illegible] Babylon [illegible] and spoof of pop-culture figures in which Snow [illegible] the [illegible] in search of Prince Charming, Club Fugazi, 7 & 10 pm, $25-$77

Bay City Cafe, 10 pm, free

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] 9-11 pm, free

[illegible] Trio [illegible], 8-11:30 pm, free

[illegible] [illegible] & The [illegible] Babylon [illegible] Room, 8 pm, $35-$45

[illegible] [illegible] playing [illegible], Top of the Mark, 9 pm-1 pm, $5-$10

Rock & Pop

Trio [illegible] [illegible], 8 pm, $30

[illegible] [illegible]'s, 10 pm, $6-$10

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible] & [illegible], 3-8 pm, free

[illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible], 8:30 pm, $7

[illegible] The Mighty w/ The [illegible], [illegible], & [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 9 pm, $10

[illegible] featuring [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], 9 pm, $6

[illegible] [illegible] w/ The [illegible], The [illegible], El Rio, 8 pm, $7

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible] w/ [illegible], The Independent, 8 pm, $20

[illegible] Night [illegible] Party w/ [illegible] [illegible], Paul [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible], 11 pm, $5

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible] All-Stars, [illegible] Cultural Center, 8:30 pm, $30

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible], 8 pm, $19.95-$30.95, $40 for Sunday [illegible]

SUNDAY 21

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

Bluegrass & Old-Time Afternoon featuring [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible], McGrath's Pub, 1 pm, $5

[illegible]'s All-Star [illegible] Sessions [illegible] & different [illegible] every week, Peter's Restaurant, 5 pm, free

SF Bluegrass & Oldtime Festival featuring [illegible] Street [illegible], [illegible], Freight & Salvage, 4 pm, $16.50-$19.50

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] [illegible] Trio [illegible], 6:30-9 pm, free

[illegible] & [illegible] Band Yoshi's, 2 & 7 pm, $16-$24, $5 kids for [illegible]

Kids

Four [illegible] Show Ashkenaz, 3 pm, $6 adults, $4 kids

Rock & Pop

[illegible] Songwriter Series [illegible] Nelson, [illegible] McKinney, [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible] Temple [illegible], 8 pm, $10

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible] de [illegible] Afro-Cuban rumba percussion & dance party, Café Valparaiso, 3:30 & 5 pm, free

[illegible] [illegible] Noe, 11 am-1 pm, free

[illegible] New Spirit Community [illegible], 7 pm, $10-$40

SAN FRANCISCO

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] [illegible] Babylon [illegible] and spoof of pop-culture figures in which Snow White [illegible] the world in search of Prince Charming, Club Fugazi, 2 & 5 pm, $25-$77

A [illegible] Night in the [illegible] featuring [illegible], [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible], The [illegible], [illegible] with [illegible], John Handy, & more, Yoshi's San Francisco, 7 pm, $45-$50

[illegible] [illegible] & [illegible] The Fillmore, 8 pm, $32.50

[illegible] [illegible] & [illegible] featuring [illegible], [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible] Saloon, 4:30-8:30 pm, $5

Rock & Pop

[illegible] w/ [illegible] Group, Hemlock Tavern, 9 pm, $7

[illegible] & The Young [illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible], Kennedy Tavern, 5:30 pm, $7

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible] and [illegible], Café du Nord, 8 pm, $10

[illegible] w/ [illegible] and [illegible], [illegible], 8 pm, $8

[illegible] w/ The [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible], 5:30 pm, $6

[illegible] [illegible] Johnny Foley's Irish House, 5 pm, free

[illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible], El Rio, 8 pm, $6

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible] w/ [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 7 pm, $10-$12

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

[illegible] Palace of Fine Arts, 7 pm, $25-$65

MONDAY 22

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

Acoustic mandolin [illegible] Caffe Trieste, 7 pm, free

Bluegrass Jam [illegible] Taqueria, 8-10 pm, free

Classical & Opera

SF [illegible] [illegible] Freight & Salvage, 8 pm, $8.50-$10.50

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

Eric [illegible] Yoshi's, 8 pm, $12

SAN FRANCISCO

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

Richard [illegible] [illegible] CD release show, Yoshi's San Francisco, 8 pm, $15-$20

Rock & Pop

[illegible] Tour featuring We The Kings, [illegible], A [illegible] to the [illegible], & [illegible], The Regency Center, 6:30 pm, $10-$18

TUESDAY 23

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

Country Western Dance Night w/ [illegible], [illegible] Bar & Grill, 7:30-11 pm, free

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]'s Coffee & Tea Garden, 7 pm, $5

[illegible] [illegible] Peter's Restaurant, 7:30-9 pm, free

[illegible] & [illegible] Ashkenaz, 8:30 pm, $10

[illegible] [illegible] Yoshi's, 8 & 10 pm, $12-$20

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

Eddie [illegible] w/ [illegible], Café Rouge, 6:30 pm, free

[illegible] Tuesdays featuring students from the [illegible] school, [illegible], 6 pm, free

Rock & Pop

Road To [illegible] 924 Gilman, 8 pm, $6

[illegible] [illegible] Stork Club, 8 pm, free

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible] & [illegible], Fox Theater, 7 pm, $39.50

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] & the Jazz [illegible] [illegible] San Francisco, 8 pm, $18

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Band Hall, 8 pm, $20

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible] & [illegible], Plough and Stars, 6 pm, free

Rock & Pop

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible], El Rio, 7 pm, $5

[illegible] [illegible] w/ [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 9 pm, $8

[illegible] [illegible] Park Chalet Brewery, 6:30 pm, free

[illegible] w/ [illegible], [illegible] & [illegible], [illegible], 8 pm, $7

[illegible] w/ Andy [illegible], El Rio, 8 pm, free

[illegible] w/ [illegible], 9 pm, $5-$8

[illegible] 'n' [illegible] Johnny Foley's Irish House, 9:30 pm, free

[illegible] w/ [illegible], Stork Club, 8 pm, $10-$12

WEDNESDAY 24

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] [illegible] & [illegible] Ashkenaz, 5:30 pm, $15-$18

[illegible] Freight & Salvage, 8 pm, $16.50-$18.50

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] & [illegible] Rooster's

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HELLBEARD
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FEBUARY 26TH
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MARCH 5TH
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ENDWELL
SUFFOKATE
DEEZ NUTS MURDER DEATH KILL
MARCH 6TH
SHRINEBUILDER
MEMBERS OF SLEEP, OM, SAINT VITUS
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Join author YVONNE PRINZ for a special reading and signing of
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Featuring an acoustic set by Matthew Edwards of The Music Lovers
& accordionist Isaac Bonnell

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Steve Sherman

Maria Muldaur

Maria Muldaur kicks off the Sweet & Low Down Wednesdays series **at Ashkenaz** (1317 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley) with her Red Hot Bluesiana Band. Muldaur has been a jug band queen and a pop diva, but in recent years she's been delving into the deep roots of New Orleans, performing the R&B, blues, and early jazz tunes associated with the Crescent City. The group's ever-shifting lineup always includes the best roots-music players available to showcase Muldaur's consistently impressive vocal presence. The dance floor will be open for this gig, so come boogie down to some of the greatest grooves this side of the bayou. On Wednesday, Feb. 24. 8:30 p.m., $15. 510-Ashkenaz.com — *J. Poet*

Max Raabe & Palast Orchester

German baritone **Max Raabe** might have grown up in the wrong era, but his music will never seem obsolete. For the past two decades Raabe has led the **Palast Orchester**, which he founded while studying opera at the Berlin University of the Arts. He specializes in songs of the Weimar era, along with classic film hits (e.g. "Singin' in the Rain" and "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?"), jazz standards, and pop songs revamped to sound like 1930s cabaret. His catalog includes bizarre reinterpretations of Queen's "We Will Rock You" (called "We Will Raabe You"), Ed Cobb's "Tainted Love," Lou Bega's "Mambo No. 5," Britney Spears' "Oops, I Did It Again," and Tom Jones' "Sex Bomb." With a voice as slick, lustrous, and expressive as the brass instruments behind him, Raabe delivers a powerful stage performance. He'll appear Saturday, Feb. 20, at the **Paramount Theatre** (2025 Broadway, Oakland), as part of the SFJAZZ Spring Season. 8 p.m., $25-$75. *ParamountTheatre.com or SFJAZZ.org.* — *R.S.*

Meshell Ndegeocello

Oft cited as the progenitor of neo-soul, **Meshell Ndegeocello** can still lay a groove fast, or and still elicit powerful emotions. She has an evocative singing voice, but she also operates through pure sensation. Her 2005 *Spirit Music Jamia: Dance* was void of lyrics and consisted largely of sprawling, improvised tracks with odd harmonies. Ndegeocello played electric bass for those dates, accompanied by a band that included DJ Jahi Sundance and the endlessly creative Chris "Daddy" Dave on drums. Her show at **Oakland Yoshi's** (510 Embarcadero) combined elements of soul and R&B in the format of a jazz jam session — albeit with a well rehearsed band, and incredible personnel. On Wednesday, Feb. 17, Ndegeocello caps off another run at Yoshi's, this time to promote her eighth album, *Devil's Halo*. She bills this year's tour as the Best of Bitter & More. 8 & 10 p.m., $24. Yoshis.com — *Rachel Swan*

Russian National Orchestra

The **Russian National Orchestra**, under the direction of its founder, pianist Mikhail Pletnev, celebrates its 20th anniversary with its first Cal Performances appearance since 2004. It also showcases 24-year-old violinist Stefan Jackiw, who plays the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, and soprano Lisa Delan, who sings Pletnev's Yeats Song Cycle. Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 rounds out the very tempting program. If you're still violin-starved, catch Joshua Bell's Cal Performances recital in the same location on Sunday at 3. At **Zellerbach Hall** (Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley) on Friday, Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m., $28-$60, $10 student rush. 510-642-9988 or CalPerformances.org. — *Jason Victor Serinus*

Sloan

Being a fan of **Sloan** is a mixed blessing: On the one hand, it's the kind of kick-ass power-pop band that conjures up the right elements: the Beatles, Big Star, Cheap Trick, and Kiss. On the other, it doesn't get the kind of props it deserves, despite releasing hook-laden masterpieces that theoretically shouldn't have any problem finding takers in this era of trendily embracing classic rock. Following 2006's *Never Hear the End of It*, a lumbering, thirty-track opus weighed down by its own enormity, Canada's greatest unknown band here in America returned in 2008 with the leaner and significantly harder-hitting *Parallel Play*. As good as Sloan is in a recording studio, it packs an even greater punch on stage. Currently doing a quick road sprint behind the *Hit & Run EP* (which also doubles as the tour's name), the Nova Scotian quartet will be doling out plenty of tight tonal riffage at **Slim's** (333 11th St., San Francisco) on Friday, Feb. 19. 9 p.m., $15. Slims-SF.com. — *Dave Gil de Rubio*

Roadhouse, 8-10 pm, free
Live Jazz Townhouse Bar & Grill, 7:30 pm, free
Madcat Gold Jazz Band Sutton Park, 7-8 pm, free
Will Bernard piano music, Garage of Saber, 6-8 pm, free

Rock & Pop

Pig Thief local music showcase presented by Pirate Cat Radio. This week: 7SongsABC, Chris Crashers, & Red Paint, Uptown, 9 pm, free
Mod Night Spoonbenz Lounge, 8 pm, free

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

Mambo Swing Shattuck Down Low, 8 pm, $5-$10

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

Jimmy Scott & the Jazz Expressions Roach

San Francisco, 7 pm, $18
Richard Thompson Band Great American Music Hall, 8 pm, $28
Rolando Rolando Rosado & Blues, 8 pm, $15

Classical & Opera

Thomas Viloteau classical guitar, Hotel Rex, 8:30 pm, $18

Experimental & Avant-Garde

Kronos Quartet: Music From 4 Rooms Project Artaud Theatre, 8 pm, $20-$25

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

Beach Blanket Babylon musical revue and spoof of pop-culture figures in which Snow White travels around the world in search of Prince Charming, Club Fugazi, 8 pm, $25-$77
Ben Marcato and the Mondo Mangos Top of the Mark, 7:30-11:30 pm, $10
Paula West & The George Mesterhazy Quartet Rrazz Room, 8 pm, $35-$45
Raja Royal w/ guitarist Bobby Cutter &

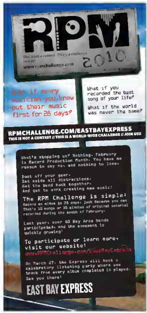
Whiteland Restaurant and Lounge, 7-10:30 pm, free

Rock & Pop

Flood w/ Three, Saber Rosch & Glen Arlegna, Bahia's, 9 pm, $6-$8
Foreign Born w/ The Birds & Only, Free Energy & The Splinters, Rickshaw Stop, 8 pm, $12-$15
The Ghost Of A Saber Tooth Tiger w/ Il By Yes, The Independent, 8 pm, $20
Radiant w/ Japanese Lounge, The Good Witches, Cafe du Nord, 8 pm, $12
Kasey Anderson w/ Quartet, Ryan, Alex Stone, & Andrew Belle, Hotel Utah, 8 pm, $8
Paul Ginsburg w/ Pepper Rabbit, Hemlock Tavern, 8 pm, $7
Fugue Wave w/ Pimentos, Man/Miracle, & Two Sheds, and on at the-hall, 8 pm, $15

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

Beats, Rhymes, Life MC Competition Parlour Lounge, 10 pm, $10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www.rpmchallenge.com
2010

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What if the world was never the same?

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What's stopping us? Nothing. February is Record Production Month. You have no reason to say no, and nothing to lose.

Dust off your gear.
Set aside all distractions.
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The RPM Challenge is simple:
Record an album in 28 days, just because you can. That's 10 songs or 35 minutes of original material recorded during the month of February.

Last year, over 60 Bay Area bands participated, and the movement is quickly growing!

To participate or learn more, visit our website:
www.RPMChallenge.com/EastBayExpress

On March 27, the Express will host a celebratory listening party where one track from every album completed is played. See you there!

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LIVE MUSIC SUNDAYS

2/28/10 2pm
BRIANA LEA PRUETT
Sweet folk blues from Northern California native
myspace.com/brianaleapruettmusic

3/7/10 2pm
CHRISTINA ANTIPA
Indie folk songwriter from CA's Central Valley, sometimes reminiscent of Chan Marshall or Tara Jane O'Neil
myspace.com/christinaantipa

3/14/10 2pm
BANG DATA
In your face rock en español mixed with reggae and hip hop
myspace.com/bangdata

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SAT 20 ASHEBA
Family Show @ 10:30am
SAT 20 MANTON DE MANILA
Music & Dance the Philippines & the Americas
SUN 21 FOOD JUSTICE
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SMOOVE SATURDAYS
DJ JAMO & DJ MARCELLA
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SUN 9PM
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DJ AEBLDEE ON THE TURNTABLES
live hip hop performances from G O D
Ms. K & Nettie Rise In
[illegible]

MON 9PM Free
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SEAN GANDALF LEHE & GREAT OWL

SAT 2/20 9PM $8
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ERIC MCGUINESS

THU 2/25 9PM $8
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LAKAY & MYSTIC MAN
DJ JAH YZER

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DJ & DANCE

THURSDAY 18

EAST BAY

Academy Night w/ DJ and VJ Joe G. spinning hip-hop, R&B, dancehall, & Top 40, White Horse Inn, 9 pm, $5, students free w/ valid ID

Club Fever w/ Selassie Dom Ruddit spinning reggae & dancehall, Shashamane Restaurant, 10 pm, free

Darkwave featuring DJs Thet, DobGrate, Jupiter, 9 pm, free

DJ Adell spinning eclectic ear candy, Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 9 pm, free

[illegible] Pop Free Planet Club DJ Kool Kyle spins reggae, local hits, & more, Kitty's, 10 pm, and

Flight Time featuring DJ Dirt Stupid, Layover Music Bar & Lounge, 10 pm, free

Happy Hour w/ DJ Donovan spinning reggae, African, salsa, cumbia, Brazilian, boogie disco, & funk, Kitty's, 7 pm, free

Voodoo DJ Jaguh & Brill MC Axiom spin classic hip-hop, reggae & soul, Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 9 pm, free

Shake, Rattle 'n' Roll spinning DJ Tanno spinning 45s/50s r&b, Forbidden Island, 8 pm, free

Thirsty Thursdays w/ DJs Wesly Slick & Franky Fresh spinning '90s throwbacks, hip-hop, & old-school, Madrone Lounge, 9 pm, free

SAN FRANCISCO

1984 DJs Damian Adam, Ponyboy, Dan, & Mohony Girl spin '80s & new wave, Cat Club, 9 pm, free before 9:30 p.m., $6

Bangladesh by Bent SS Bent Ale Rising, [illegible], The Knockout, 7:30 pm, free

DJ Sarrah & Keyboards spinning [illegible], 7 pm, free

[illegible] rotating DJs, The EndUp, 10 pm, $10

Ruptured w/ Ron the Vinyl Archaeologist, and guest DJs spinning hip-hop spinning funk, free dancehall, reggae, house, & [illegible], Ultra Lounge, 10 pm, $5

Rootit Top Thursdays w/ Jah Warrior Shelter Hi-Fi, Jah Yzer, Ms Irie, & Kiter spinning reggae, Club Six, 9 pm-2 am, $5, free before 11 p.m. w/ RSVP

Tropicana & girl w/ DJ Guadalupe, Sr Sanchez & guests spinning Salsa, Cumbia, Reggaeton and Merengue, Madrone Lounge, 9 pm, free

FRIDAY 19

EAST BAY

Back to the Rock with Moonfield and Jeff Rootit Layover Music Bar & Lounge, 11 pm, free

Back in the Friday DJ Pomaford plays Music from the '80s, Kitty's, 9 pm, free

Caribbean Night DJs Dostro and Voodoo spin reggae, soca, salsa, and R&B, Island Paradise Club, 9 pm, $10

[illegible] w/ DJ Ryan DJ Ryan spinning the best DJ sound in the Bay Area, White Horse Inn, 9 pm, $5

Caribbean Fridays DJs Platano, Mono & guests spin old school hip-hop and funk, Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 10 pm, $10

Friday Night Reggae Party w/ DJ Sweet-Roger, Marcus Moss Sound, & guests spinning reggae, R&B, & oldyes, Sweet Fingers, 9 pm, free

Thump Hours w/ DJ Golden Gwen spinning punk rock, indie, & black rock, Missouri Lounge, 6-10 pm, free

La Onda Tiare Flores, & Chocolanta spin Spanglish soul, R&B, cumbia, and club

[illegible] Kardaman City, 10 pm, $5

[illegible] weekly in-house DJ series, Amoeba Music, 7-10 pm, free

Old School hip-hop and funk, Radio, & [illegible], free

Eclectic DJ Joe Quinn spins funk, Latin, & dub, Easy Lounge, 10 pm, free

Retro Deluxe Rootit house hosts '80s pop night, Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 9 pm, free

Stomp w/ DJ Bhore Prayers spinning northern soul, oldies, '60s, house, punk, new wave, & rock 'n' roll, Ruby Room, 10 pm, free

SAN FRANCISCO

Blow Up indie-pop-disco-rock nightclub, Rickshaw Stop, 10 pm, $10 for 21 +, $10 for 18-21

Compression featuring DJ DJ Bryan Ortiz, 330 Ritch St., 10 pm, $10

Dirt DJs Mossie, Kay DJ Harris, & Shane King spin electro, booty bass, crunk, breaks, [illegible], hip-hop, & party classics, Madrone Lounge, 4 pm, $5 after 11 p.m.

DJ Foot Thump and [illegible] Make Out Room, 11 pm, $5

Hoodoo Friday Jim Scotty Fox, Derrick D, MCD, & Chicken Voodoo spin '60s and hip-hop, The Cellar, 10 pm, free before 11 p.m., $10 after

Inflection rotating DJs, The EndUp, 11 pm, $15, free [illegible]

Mandatie weekly in-house DJ series, Amoeba Music, 6-8 pm, free

Skills rotating live performers plus DJ Neil Martinson spinning rock, soul, French pop, & more, The Rosewood, 10 pm, free

Stiletto dance party spinning by Flavor Tap, w/ rotating DJs, Jade Bar, 10 pm, $8

VSL Fridays w/ rotating DJs from the Bay Area and around the [illegible] spinning hip-hop, Vessel, 4 pm, $10

SATURDAY 20

EAST BAY

Caribbean Night DJs cotton and classics, spin reggae, soca, salsa and R&B, Island Paradise Club, 9 pm, $10

Club-Classics w/ DJs Ryan, Drew Olga 7 & guests spinning hip-hop & R&B, Sarah and Tiar, 9 pm, $5-$10

Seduction Thursdays w/ Addict Isaac spinning reggae, dancehall, & hip-hop, The Avenue, 9 pm, free

Double Dragon w/ Rootit and Emily spinning hip-hop, indie pop, punk, leunk, & funk, Missouri Lounge, 10 pm, free

Freaky-Deaky DJ Mono and guests spin hip-hop, R&B, mashups, and rock, College Lane, 9 pm, and

La Gente Loca Latino Lounge night w/ DJs spinning salsa, classics, & [illegible] plus hot go-go [illegible], Club 21, 8 pm, $8-$15

Max Kaen & Drew w/ DJs Max Kaen and Farmer's market cocktails at 2:00 a.m., Easy Lounge, 10 pm, free

Rootit Reloaded DJ Mark Voodoo spins [illegible] reggae, Kingman's Ivy Room, 8 pm, free

Warm-Up w/ DJ Field Cut spinning hip-hop, R&B, Missouri Lounge, 6-10 pm, free

SAN FRANCISCO

DJ Club Oz Swig Bar, 9 pm, free

Classics Saturdays w/ DJ Greg Hornett spinning hip-hop, rock, & mash-ups, Element Lounge, 9 pm, $8

Saturdaze indie party w/ DJs spinning '80s, new wave & hip-hop, Cat Club, 9 pm, free

The Spinning Off spinning DJs House classics, Lory Gamboa, & DJ Nick spinning, Club Six, 9 pm, $5-$10

M.I.R.L. w/ DJ Taj, DJ Marc, 1015 Nightclub, 10 pm, $15-$20

Seduction w/ DJs spinning hip-hop and club hits, The Cellar, 9 pm, free before 10 p.m., $10 after

The Stoop w/ DJs Sense, Music Delivery John Early, & guests spinning soul, funk, & electro, The EndUp, 10 pm, $15

[illegible] w/ Dirtywaves, Moya, Mezzanine, 9 pm, $12

SUNDAY 21

EAST BAY

DJ Weeney w/ [illegible] spinning old-school, R&B, & more, Kitty's, 7 pm, free

Major w/ DJ [illegible] spinning soul, soul, & Afrocentric old-school, Somar Bar & Lounge, 9 pm, free

The Soul-Full Show DJ Addi Bee & guests spin soulful grooves, Luka's Madrone Lounge, 6 pm, free

This Must Be The Place [illegible] by Sal Lomardi, 2022 Lounge, 3 pm, $5

Dirt magazine benefit 21 Grand Gallery/Performance Space, 9 pm, $10

Spinning Stiffs DJ Daniel Irwin hosts [illegible] & old-school for bar & dancehall staff, Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 9 pm, free

SAN FRANCISCO

Club [illegible] w/ DJ Sep, Maneesh the Twister, & guests spinning dub, house & dancehall classics, Elbo Room, 9 pm, $5

MONDAY 22

EAST BAY

DJ Ango spinning dub, ska, & soul, Easy Lounge, 4 pm, free

Club Noise & Draw w/ Gears 4 p.m.-8 p.m., & Max 8 p.m.-1 a.m., Club 1220, 4 pm-2 am, free

Underground Lounge psycho '60s & garage '70s music, Radio, 10 pm-2 am, free

Spinning Stiffs DJ Daniel hosts spins [illegible] & old-school for bar & dancehall staff, Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 9 pm, free

TUESDAY 23

EAST BAY

Country Music Night plus free dancing, Club 1220, 9 pm, free

DJ Isaac hosts Thump spinning rock, indie, punk, new wave & more, Missouri Lounge, 10 pm, free

DJ Westy spinning punk, Luka's Madrone Lounge, 4 pm-2 am, free

Rockit Science DJ Mark Watson hosts [illegible] beats, Kingman's Ivy Room, 9 pm, free

Soul Flyth DJs Sug, Kool Kyle, & guests spin reggae, dancehall, & classics, Luka's Madrone & Lounge, 11 pm, free

Mamar Hang Out w/ DJs spinning rock, soft hits, oldies, & soul, Ruby Room, 10 pm, free

WEDNESDAY 24

EAST BAY

'80s Night with Mr. DNA Mr. DNA party songs from the '80s, plus drink spinning by Cary, Easy Lounge, 8 pm, free

Club Bamboo Latin country night w/ club hoppers, Bahia and Baby, 9 pm, $8-$10

Lagos [illegible] w/ DJs Asian Art Stone Master, Kim Khob and Jaysene spinning house and electronica, Rootit on [illegible], 4 pm, $5

Thump Inn w/ DJs [illegible] & [illegible] classics, at Antoine, Missouri Lounge, 10 pm-2 am, free

The Spinning Off Thump City Hip-Hop w/ DJs spinning hip-hop, Club 21, 9 pm, $8-$15

Voodoo Wednesdays DJ Santero & rotating guests spin salsa, cumbia, merengue, reggaeton, & more plus salsa lessons, Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 9 pm, free

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THU Indie Nation w/ DJ Geo

FRI East Bay's Got Soul w/ DJ Top Banana DJ Chicano & guests

SAT Free Pool 4 - 7 "The Top" w/ DJ Salvatore Valentino

SUN Tamale Sunday Free food! 2pm ???

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Tue 2.23 The Cal Alumni Big Band (1?? pc)

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SAVAGE LOVE

THE OLD PERV STICKS AROUND

Why it's best not to sever a long-term, albeit unusual relationship

Dan Savage

My boyfriend and I have been together for nine months. We are gay. We live in a college town. We both found jobs here after we graduated, so we stayed. Since his sophomore year, my boyfriend has had an "arrangement" with an older man, a professor at the university. We are in our mid-20s. This man is in his late 60s. The old man comes to my boyfriend's apartment once a week and cleans it. Does his laundry. Washes his dishes. He actually pays my boyfriend for the privilege. It's not much, $50, and the old perv says it's for my boyfriend's "time," since a part of their deal is that my boyfriend has to be in the apartment while the old perv cleans it. He's particularly pervy about how he cleans my boyfriend's bathroom, Dan: the old perv cleans my boyfriend's toilet bowl with his own toothbrush, which he then uses to brush his teeth the rest of the week!

There is no sex. None of this would matter if my boyfriend and I weren't talking about moving in together. I want this "arrangement" to stop. I don't feel comfortable using a toilet that a man old enough to be my grandfather cleaned with his toothbrush. This has been going on for six years. My boyfriend says he likes the clean apartment more than he needs the money. But I say all good things must come to an end, and if I'm moving in, we'll have to clean up after ourselves or pay a real cleaning lady to come around once a week.

We agreed to leave it up to you, Dan. The old perv stays? The old perv goes?

Toothbrushes Are For Teeth

The old perv stays.

By allowing this man to clean his apartment, your boyfriend is making an old perv very happy, and that makes the world a more joyful place generally. Your boyfriend isn't taking advantage of the old perv — $50 is a much more reasonable fee than most sex workers would charge for the same service — and while the toothbrush/toilet thing is a bit creepy and unsanitary — I'm sure you'll get used to it and/or be able to put it out of your mind.

Let's recognize this arrangement for what it really is: a successful long-term relationship. How many relationships last six years? Sorry, but I'm constitutionally disinclined to dissolve a successful six-year relationship in favor of a relationship that has yet to reach one year.

I think you knew I would side with the perv, which leads me to believe that you're secretly okay with this arrangement and an extra $50 a week to put toward household expenses, money that you can invest in cases of Clorox Wipes. You wanted a little plausible deniability, a way for the arrangement to continue without having to give it your blessing, and needed some cover. And now you have it.

I'm in a friends-with-benefits arrangement with a woman I get along with really well and I am interested in a real relationship. I know she's open to it, but there's one thing holding me back. She's overweight. And while it doesn't matter to me, it restricts what's possible in bed. Do I talk to her about it? If so, how?

Some Dude

If this woman's weight didn't interfere with a friends-with-benefits arrangement — a purely sexual bargain — why would her weight and the limitations it places on what's possible in bed factor into your decision to take this relationship "to the next level," as the life coaches/douchebags like to say? Don't make the mistake of assuming the choice you face is one between some hypothetical skinny bitch with no restrictions and this big woman who comes with some restrictions. Everyone has their own limits, their own capabilities, their own tastes and preferences, SD, and only a handful of us wind up in long-term relationships with partners without any restrictions whatsoever.

As for how to talk to her about her weight: Well, based on the furious and furiously defensive mail that pours in whenever the subject of weight comes up, I'd suggest you discuss it through a bulletproof glass partition. Or you could launch that real relationship, move in with her and, presuming you eat decently and get regular exercise yourself, set an example of the kind of lifestyle choices that will bring down her weight and up her game.

I am a straight male. I have a problem ejaculating with a partner. I have failed to complete the act even when I arranged a session with two well-known porn stars I REALLY wanted. This despite sticking it nearly everywhere — no Greek — and in nearly every position. The only way I can reliably come is when I hump my mattress naked with a towel underneath me. What is my problem? I take Zoloft, which can have the effect of delaying orgasm, but that doesn't explain how I can get off so quickly with my towel, which I do daily, but I couldn't get it done in an entire hour with my favorite big butted porn star who let me do whatever I wanted!

Fucking A Towel

Moving on, FAT, it pains me to inform you that you've ruined your dick with that towel-and-mattress routine. You've trained your dick to respond to one kind of stimulation and one kind of stimulation only, a particular kind of stimulation that has very little in common with the sensations provided by big butted porn stars. Your only hope is to stop humping the bed. Get some lube, use your left hand, use your right hand, invest in a Fleshlight, masturbate on your back, standing up, kneeling. Vary your masturbatory routine and habits and — this is the hard part — don't resort to the towel and mattress if you have difficulty getting off. You spent a lot of time programming your dick, and it's going to take some time to reprogram your dick, FAT. The only way to do that is to deny your dick — forever and ever, amen — the towel-and-mattress routine. Once your dick realizes that there's no going back, it'll adapt. It will begin to respond to the new and closer-to-human sensations that you're making available to it. Good luck. ■

Find my podcast at TheStranger.com/savage
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ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: RG10494318
Alameda County Superior Court [illegible]. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: JENNIFER ELIZABETH [illegible] filed a petition with this court for a decree changing name as follows: Present Name: JENNIFER ELIZABETH [illegible] to Proposed Name: JENNIFER [illegible]. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. NOTICE OF HEARING: March 19, 2010, at 11:00 A.M. in Dept. 31, at U.S. Post Office Building, 201 13TH St, 2nd Floor, Oakland, CA 94612. A copy of this Order To Show Cause shall be published at least once a week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: East Bay Express, [illegible] County, California. Dated: Feb 1, 2010. Signed: [illegible] Judge of the Superior Court
2/10, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 431448
The following individual is doing business as **M.O.M.S.** [illegible] Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland, CA 94609 [illegible]
M.O.M.S.
2/10, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 432048
The following individual is doing business as **Kindness of Being** [illegible]
Kindness of Being
2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24/2010

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: RG10494031
Alameda County Superior Court [illegible]. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: JULIA CAROLINE NANCY SUDBURY filed a petition with this court for a decree changing name as follows: Present Name: JULIA CAROLINE NANCY SUDBURY to Proposed Name: JULIA [illegible]. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. NOTICE OF HEARING: MAY 28, 2010, at 11:00 A.M. in Dept. 31, at 201 13TH St., 2nd Floor, Oakland, CA 94612. A copy of this Order To Show Cause shall be published at least once a week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: East Bay Express, [illegible] County, California. Dated: January [illegible], 2010. Signed: [illegible] Judge of the Superior Court
1/27, 2/3, 2/10, 2/17/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 433130
The following individual is doing business as **Albany Properties** [illegible] Albany, CA [illegible] San Ramon [illegible]
Albany Properties
1/27, 2/3, 2/10, 2/17/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 433714-433715
The following individual is doing business as **Amanda's & Ammie's Feel Good Fresh Food** [illegible] 2129 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA 94704 [illegible]
Amanda's & Ammie's Feel Good Fresh Food
2/17, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10/2010

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: RG10498852
Alameda County Superior Court [illegible]. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: JASMINE [illegible] filed a petition with this court for a decree changing name as follows: Present Name: JASMINE [illegible] to Proposed Name: JASMINE [illegible]. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. NOTICE OF HEARING: March 11, 2010, at 11:00 A.M. in Dept. 31, at U.S. Post Office Building, 201 13TH St, 2nd Floor, Oakland, CA 94612. A copy of this Order To Show Cause shall be published at least once a week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: East Bay Express, [illegible] County. Dated: [illegible] 2010. Signed: [illegible] Judge of the Superior Court
2/10, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 430736
The following individual is doing business as [illegible] Berkeley, CA 94705 [illegible]
[illegible]

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 433218
The following individual is doing business as **Marlon's Inn LLP** [illegible] Oakland, CA 94607 [illegible]
Marlon's Inn LLP
2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24/2010

[illegible]

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # [illegible]
The following individual is doing business as [illegible] Oakland, CA 94612 [illegible]

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 434004-07
The following individual is doing business as [illegible] **Stay Films & Ping Films** [illegible]
Stay Films & Ping Films
2/17, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 436440
The following individual is doing business as **Street Express Logistics** [illegible]
Street Express Logistics
2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 433562-63
The following individual is doing business as **SAG Production & SAG Production Hompno** [illegible] Berkeley, CA 94703 [illegible]
SAG Production & SAG Production Hompno
2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 434243
The following individual is doing business as **Production** [illegible] Berkeley, CA 94703 [illegible]
Production
2/10, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10/2010

[illegible]
2/10, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10/2010

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 434348
The following individual is doing business as **Hompno** [illegible] Oakland, CA 94606 [illegible]
Hompno
2/10, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10/2010

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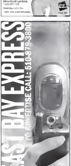

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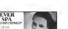

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